

Your Child's Legs and Feet as They Grow

Leg Development

It is typical for most infants to be born with their legs in a bowlegged position. As children reach the age of three, they typically begin to appear more knock-kneed. Research has shown that around the age of seven, the hip, knee, and foot alignment will be similar to an adult. It is important to note every child develops alignment unique to their own body, which is not concerning if a child is pain-free and achieving functional gross motor skills such as walking, squatting, or running. A referral to a specialist may be required if a child is knock-kneed before the age of two or bowlegged past the age of three.



Foot Development

Newborn feet typically appear flat due to a fat pad on the bottom of the foot. This fat pad remains there until at least two years of age. The arch of the foot will continue to develop between two and eight years old. The appearance of flat feet may be due to excessive ankle flexibility, which causes the arch to flatten when the child puts weight on the foot in standing. Some children have flat feet that continue beyond six years old. If your child is experiencing pain or decreased balance during activities like standing or walking, you should notify your pediatrician to determine if treatment is required.

Foot Position When Walking

New walkers typically position their feet with their toes pointed outward to help themselves feel more stable during this challenging new skill. This alignment typically resolves by 18 to 24 months of age. If it continues beyond 24 months, it could be due to the position of the bones in the leg. Some children, however, will position their feet with their toes pointed inward. This could be from positioning in the womb, frequently sitting with their legs in a 'W' pattern, the shape of the foot itself or the position of the bones in the leg. Research has shown only 0.1% of foot and leg position issues result in surgery and that they will usually resolve without treatment.

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