

The British Chiropody Association

Maidenhead



Berkshire

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FACT SHEET

LOOKING AFTER YOUR FEET

Care of Children's Feet

Good foot care procedures in early childhood will help your children to have healthy feet not only in the formative years, but for the rest of their lives. The British Chiropody Association which represents 8,000 qualified Chiropodists in the UK, has prepared this leaflet for parents so that they can better understand what represents 'good practice' for the care of their children's feet.

Baby's Feet

At birth, baby's feet are extremely soft, and therefore susceptible to damage. The foot consists of some twenty-six bones made from cartilage with blood vessels and ligaments and with natural growth the cartilage eventually turns into bone. Your baby's foot will grow into half its adult size in the first year and will be fully developed by the late teens.

Natural Development

Here are some practical tips for you to consider with baby's feet:

- Ensure feet are not restricted by tight sleeping suits or stretch hosiery.
- Baby will enjoy kicking exercises, and give you satisfaction, thus allowing muscles to develop. Make sure that baby does this whilst lying uncovered.
- Baby's bedclothes should be light and loose fitting, without restricting foot movement.

Those First Steps

The normal walking age is between ten and eighteen months, so do not pressurise your baby in to starting any earlier. Do not worry initially about shoes for your offspring: going barefoot, in the house, allows the foot to develop and muscles to grow. But make sure that children do not walk outside in bare feet or in dirty areas, for obvious reasons. You will soon know that shoe time has arrived with steady walking and heels in contact with the ground.

Measuring Baby's Feet

Parents are strongly advised to buy their children's shoes from reputable shops. It is vital to measure feet when youngsters are standing, allowing the foot to slightly alter shape when full weight is applied. Cut two strips of paper half inch (15mm) wide and length of feet when standing. After marking papers left and right, slip into relevant shoes until toecap is reached. Aim for a three-quarters of an inch (20mm) gap between end of paper and shoe heel. A child's feet MUST be measured before purchase, and children MUST be present when shoes are bought.

Not 'Sunday Best' anymore!

Do not let Jimmy or Jane keep a pair of 'Sunday Best' shoes. Such a pair of infrequently used shoes will be outgrown before out-worn, the result being to wear them when they are far too small. This problem includes the categories of sports shoes and boots as well as party shoes.

John is wearing David's shoes

Not to be recommended! Shoes mould themselves to the wearer's foot. If you put a child into shoes that have adjusted to another foot, even when the size matches, then there will be trouble a foot!

Comfort in, Fashion out

As a parent, be firm in rejecting fashion elements such as high heels which will effect the development of the foot. Buy less expensive shoes and change them frequently for larger sizes as feet develop, rather than the purchase of expensive ranges - thus making your child wear a shoe after he/she has grown out of it. Children's shoe manufacturers offer an excellent, value for money choice: do remember sandals with open toes are ideal for summer and indoor wear.

Sock it to them

Your best bet is for cotton or woollen socks, using well-known brands. Remember to throw them away as soon as they press the toes and shrink. Make sure socks are never too short in length. Stretch nylon socks are banned, because the foot stretches the sock and the sock compresses the foot, particularly the toes.

Above all, allow your children to go barefoot as much as possible as their feet will then develop with strong, straight toes. Barefoot is ideal on beaches, on carpets and on sandy shores.

The way they walk

A qualified Chiropodist from the British Chiropody Association will be able to tell a great deal from how your child walks. The sooner problems are identified; the quicker professional action can be taken. It is not unusual for British Chiropody Association members to treat children of 12 to 24 months old. Do remember that after the age of seven the foot is well advanced and structural problems will be difficult to correct. Your local British Chiropody Association member may suggest that exercises are needed, or 'slip ins' for shoes to alter foot structure and shape.

Many parents worry about flat feet. This normally disappears when baby begins to stand and walk. In extreme cases your qualified Chiropodist would provide foot supports. Parents can also be alarmed when their child starts tripping. This is 'toeing' in or out and exercises will be needed: do not worry, it is not serious. Special equipment may be recommended to persuade the foot back into the correct position. At it's worst, your British Chiropody Association Chiropodist may suggest a visit to a paediatrician as these unusual problems may have originated in the hip.

Regular foot routines are important

- Feet should be washed every day in warm, soapy water. After thorough drying, particularly so between the toes, use a proprietary foot powder.
- Do not cut the nails too short and trim toe nails regularly straight across. You should not cut down the sides as this can produce ingrown nails.
- Check and inspect their feet every day: bath time is as good and practical time as any. Frequently children are unable to feel damage being done so never assume that no complaints means no problem.

Mummy, it hurts!

Common problems for your youngsters include verrucae (warts) - a viral infection which is particularly prevalent amongst children. Make sure you check areas of pressure carefully. The British Chiropody Association has a special leaflet on Verrucae, available free on request from their offices - see address and phone number at the end of this leaflet. Another common problem is Athlete's Foot, which is a fungal infection between the toes. These problems may persist and if so you should immediately contact your nearest British Chiropody Association member for treatment advice.

You and the British Chiropody Association

For your nearest British Chiropody Association member look in the local telephone directory or the box in Yellow Pages headed British Chiropody Association. The letters MSSCh or FSSCh accompanied by MBChA indicate that the Chiropodist concerned is either a Member or a Fellow of the School of Surgical Chiropody having undertaken extensive training and passed a searching examination. The letters MBChA denote that the Chiropodist is a member of the British Chiropody Association. That person undertakes to act professionally in every manner, and adheres to a strict code of professional conduct.

Should you have any difficulty in finding a qualified Chiropodist in your area, or have any further questions as a result of reading this leaflet, please write or telephone:

The Secretary, The British Chiropody Association, The New Hall, 149 Bath Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire. SL64LA
Telephone: (01628) 32449 or 32440.

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