

PAEDIATRIC FOOT DISORDERS

Understanding Foot Deformities in Children:

Introduction

Foot deformities in children are common concerns that can affect a child's comfort, mobility, and overall development. While some deformities are benign, others may require medical attention. This write-up aims to inform parents about these conditions, particularly focusing on flatfoot, its diagnosis, treatment options, and the vital role of pediatric orthopedic surgeons in managing these conditions.

Common Foot Deformities in Children

Foot deformities can manifest in various forms, including clubfoot, metatarsus adductus, and flatfoot. Early symptoms can range from visible structural anomalies to discomfort or pain during walking. Notably, early diagnosis and intervention can prevent potential complications and promote healthy foot development.

Flatfoot: A Normal Variation

“Flatfoot”, or pes planus, is a condition where the arch of the foot is lower than usual or absent, causing the entire foot to contact the ground. It is important to note that flatfoot is a common and often normal variation, especially in young children, as their arches can develop until around age six, sometimes even during early adolescence.

In most cases, flatfoot does not cause symptoms or require treatment. However, if a child experiences pain, fatigue, or difficulty with physical activities, further evaluation may be necessary. Flatfoot can sometimes be associated with other conditions, so observing and reporting any discomfort is crucial.

Early Symptoms and Diagnosis

Parents should be vigilant for signs of foot pain in their children, such as limping, reluctance to participate in physical activities, or complaints of pain in the feet, ankles, or legs. Any noticeable changes in the shape or alignment of the feet should also be brought to the attention of a healthcare provider. Early diagnosis, often achieved through a physical examination and sometimes imaging, helps determine the need for intervention.

Treatment Options

The treatment for foot deformities depends on the specific condition and its severity. For most cases of flatfoot, no treatment is necessary if the child is asymptomatic. If pain or discomfort is present, treatment options may include:

1. Orthotic Devices: Custom orthotics can provide support and alleviate discomfort.
2. Physical Therapy: Exercises can strengthen the muscles around the foot and improve function.
3. Shoe Modifications: Supportive footwear can help manage symptoms.
4. Surgery: In rare cases where conservative treatments fail, surgical intervention may be considered.

The necessity of treatment primarily revolves around improving function, reducing pain, and preventing future complications.

The Role of a Pediatric Orthopedic Surgeon

Pediatric orthopedic surgeons specialize in diagnosing and treating musculoskeletal issues in children, including foot deformities. They play a critical role in:

- Assessment: Conducting thorough evaluations to diagnose the type and severity of the deformity.
- Management Plan: Developing individualized treatment plans that may include monitoring, non-surgical interventions, or surgical options.
- Education: Guiding parents and children on proper foot care and preventive measures.
- Long-term Follow-up: Ensuring the child's foot health is maintained through regular follow-ups and adjustments to the treatment plan as needed.

Conclusion

Parents play a crucial role in observing and addressing foot deformities in children. While flatfoot is often a normal variation, other deformities might require attention. Understanding the symptoms and seeking timely consultation with a pediatric orthopedic surgeon like Dr Shravan, can ensure your child's feet develop healthily, allowing them to lead active, pain-free lives

<https://youtu.be/fiXzmlil4KQ>