From the time they are born, virtually all babies have flat feet. Their feet will develop and their arches will gradually form over the first decade of their life. As their arch forms, it may also be hidden by the extra fat that they have on their feet. For this reason, flat-footedness in children is often considered to be perfectly normal unless accompanied by other symptoms.

Whether a child requires treatment is primarily determined by the following key signs and symptoms:

- Are they experiencing any pain or discomfort?
- If not, is their arch height improving or worsening over time?
- Are there any muscular, joint or neurological concerns?
- Do they have a parent whose flat-footedness has been a concern?

If a child has flat feet that are stable (not worsening) and without pain, discomfort or any other more serious concerns, they often do not require treatment. Should they be symptom free, but exhibit other structural concerns, they will be monitored and possibly treated over time. In the rare cases whereby muscular, joint or neurological concerns exist, treatment will be necessary.

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**CAUSE**

Flat feet in children may simply be part of their normal foot development. However, there are other reasons why a child may develop flat feet. Here are some examples:

- Genetic - parents with flat feet are more likely to have children with flat feet
- Fusion of two bones - occasionally a child is born with two bones that are joined together, causing a flattened arch
- A short or tight Achilles tendon (a muscle cord, connecting your “calf muscles” to the back of the heel)
- In more serious but rare cases, it may be due to a neurological disorder

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**EFFECT**

Flat feet in children can lead to:

- Pain and tenderness in the arch or heel (on the bottom or at the back)
- Leg pain
- Hip and knee pain
- Withdrawal from physical activity due to pain
- Arthritis as adults
THE SOLUTION

STRETCHING
When Achilles tendon tightness is the cause of the flat feet, a stretching protocol can be an effective means of loosening the soft tissues to allow improved flexibility and allow for arch formation. Typically a regular stretching regime at home will suffice, however, sometimes children require the assistance of a Physiotherapist.

INSOLES & CUSTOM-MADE ORTHOTICS
For children with flexible flat feet who are experiencing discomfort, an over-the-counter insole in combination with appropriate footwear can be very successful at relieving their pain. In symptomatic cases where footwear and over the counter insoles alone are not sufficient to relieve pain or to correct foot function, custom-made orthotics is the gold standard for treatment, allowing the muscles and joints to experience less strain.

FOOTWEAR
Properly fitting, supportive footwear is key. In skates, ski boots or soccer shoes, where space may be limited and insoles do not fit, your BioPed clinician may recommend modifications to the footwear; an “arch cookie” can be made and permanently attached to any footwear to ensure proper support while participating in all types of activities.

Features to look for in a shoe include:
• Stability and support in the arch area - the middle of the shoe should not be flexible
• Strong heel counter - you should not be able to distort the heel of the shoe
• Wide base - you do not want the sole of the shoe to narrow under the arch

BIOPed CLINICAL SPECIALISTS
BioPed clinicians are specialized in the casting, manufacturing, fitting and modification of custom-made orthotics. All orthotics are fabricated in our on-site lab; a fully functioning laboratory inside our clinic. BioPed clinicians can also make recommendations on over-the-counter insoles, proper footwear and appropriate stretches. They have been trained to assess patients of all ages, including children.

To learn more, please visit: www.bioped.com