

Flat Feet

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What are they?



A flat foot condition exists when there is a marked flattening or lowering of the longitudinal arch. The foot actually appears collapsed in the midsection area and during walking or standing. It seems rolled-in so that the inside of the foot contacts the ground. These patients will frequently complain of wearing out or breaking

down their shoes rapidly because of the foot position. Common symptoms or complaints from patients with flat feet include fatigue, cramping, bunions, corns, calluses, shin splints and heel pain. It should be noted however, that not all flat feet are problems, nor do they all require treatment. Pain should be the number one motivating force to seek treatment. Congenital flat feet or those present at birth frequently are not clinical problems while those developed over time often need additional consideration. Particular concerns are those feet that have a normal appearing arch during non-weight bearing periods but assume a more flattened appearance during standing. These feet are frequently excessively pronating or rolling-in at the arch and are the ones that most often produce clinical symptoms.

What causes them?

The possible causes of flat feet comprise a lengthy list. As mentioned earlier, a congenital type or one present at birth may well reflect a developmental embryonic condition. Certain types of flat feet are considered acquired and develop later in life possible due to injury, anatomic abnormalities or various arthritic conditions. Perhaps, the most frequently seen type of flat foot and the one potentially most problematic is that of the excessively pronated foot. This foot type results from faulty mechanics during walking and standing periods and has the capability of causing a host of secondary problems if not managed properly.

Treatment

In most cases, the treatment of the pronated flat foot involves **orthotics** or foot and ankle supportive devices. These effectively reduce the in-rolling tendency and help to support the foot and ankle during gait. Other less frequently used approaches in the management of various flat foot conditions include shoe modifications, injections, oral anti-inflammatory medications, physical therapy and if all else fails and the pain persists, surgery. The number one treatment is to try to control the motion with a custom orthotic.