

Children's Feet

Birth

Children's feet differ from those of adults, as they are not yet fully formed. Around 10cm long at birth, the feet will double in size by the time your child is one year old. At 6 months of age the foot is still mostly cartilage, by 18 years, most of the bones (one quarter of all the bones in the body) are fully formed.

Baby

By 6 months your baby will be aware of and begin to play with both feet. The only footwear babies need is socks for warmth, as they are not constrictive and allow the feet to grow normally.

Walking

At around 12 months most children begin standing and walking. Those first steps are always exciting but just imagine – your toddler will probably walk the equivalent of four times around the world in a lifetime! Rapid growth during childhood may require changing the size of your child's socks and shoes every few months.

Play

By the age of three, children are learning to jump, skip, hop, kick a ball and pedal a bicycle. Running, a more complex task than walking, is now also being mastered. Shoes should offer protection from injury or cold and still allow freedom and mobility. Make sure there is enough depth, length and width to accommodate the foot. Laces or straps that hold the shoe securely to the foot reduce slippage when walking.

Healthy feet

Children's feet are not simply little adult's feet – they have a unique developmental pattern of their own. A check-up with your podiatrist is recommended if:

- ▼ You notice uneven shoe wear
- ▼ You notice any skin rashes, hard skin, lumps or bumps on the feet
- ▼ Your child complains of recurrent pain in the feet or legs
- ▼ Your child is constantly tripping and falling, or you have any other concerns about your children's feet.

School

By the age of six, children's feet will have a quite grown-up appearance and their walking will resemble the pattern of an adult. Teach them to tie their shoelaces – a skill they'll need for school. Keeping feet clean and dry and wearing thongs or sandals around the swimming pool helps to prevent tinea and warts – two common skin infections.

Where can I find a podiatrist?

Refer to your Yellow Pages™ for a list of podiatrists in your area, or contact the Australian Podiatry Association in your state, or the New Zealand Society of Podiatrists.



PODIATRY