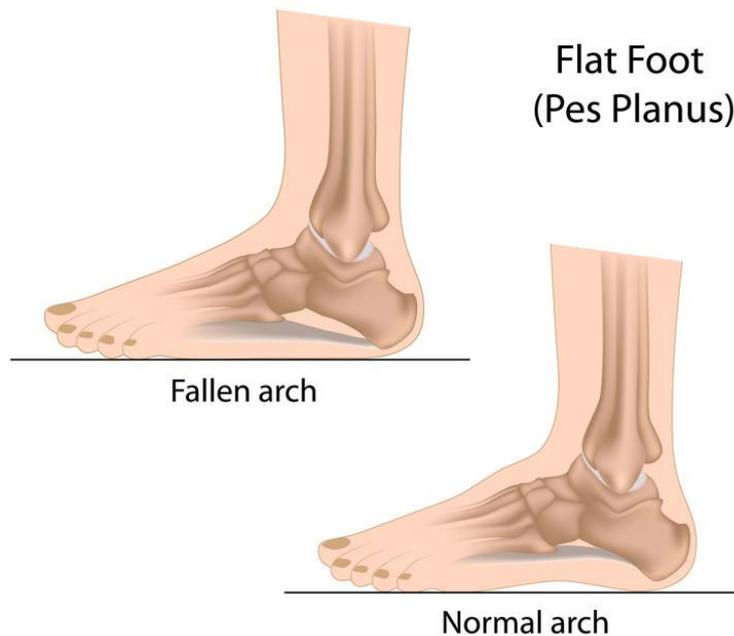


Flat Feet (Pes Planus)



What are flat feet?

Flat feet, also known as **pes planus**, is a condition where the arch on the inside of the foot is lower than normal or completely flattened. This may affect one foot or both. In some people, the arch appears when sitting or on tiptoes but flattens when standing (flexible flat foot). In others, the arch is always flat (rigid flat foot).

Flat feet are common and often **do not cause any problems**.

What causes flat feet?

Flat feet can be caused by:

- Natural foot shape (often runs in families)
- Weakness or tightness of foot and ankle muscles
- Ligament laxity (looser joints)
- Tendon problems, especially the posterior tibial tendon

- Injury to the foot or ankle
- Arthritis or inflammatory conditions
- Being overweight, which increases load on the feet
- Pregnancy (temporary flattening may occur)

In children, flat feet are very common and usually improve as they grow.

Common symptoms

Many people with flat feet have **no symptoms**. When symptoms do occur, they may include:

- Foot pain or aching, especially in the arch or heel
 - Ankle pain or instability
 - Tired or aching feet after walking or standing
 - Pain that worsens with prolonged activity
 - Knee, hip, or lower back discomfort due to altered walking pattern
 - Shoes wearing out unevenly
-

How is flat feet diagnosed?

Flat feet are usually diagnosed through:

- Discussion of your symptoms and activity levels
 - Visual examination of your feet while standing and walking
 - Checking foot movement, strength, and flexibility
 - In some cases, imaging (X-ray, ultrasound, or MRI) if pain is severe or persistent
-

Treatment options

Treatment depends on symptoms rather than foot shape alone.

If you have no pain

- No treatment is required
- Stay active and wear supportive footwear

If you have pain or discomfort

Physiotherapy may help with:

- Foot and ankle strengthening exercises
- Stretching tight muscles (calf and Achilles tendon)
- Improving walking mechanics and balance
- Activity modification advice

Footwear advice:

- Supportive shoes with good arch support
- Firm heel counter (back of the shoe)
- Avoid worn-out or unsupportive footwear (e.g. flip-flops)

Insoles (orthotics):

- May help reduce pain and improve comfort
- Can be off-the-shelf or custom-made

Pain relief:

- Simple painkillers if appropriate
- Ice packs after activity to reduce discomfort

Exercises commonly recommended

Your physiotherapist may prescribe exercises such as:

- Short foot (arch control) exercises
- Calf stretches
- Heel raises
- Balance exercises

Always follow the advice given by your physiotherapist.

When should I seek further help?

You should seek advice if:

- Pain is worsening or not improving

- Walking becomes difficult
 - You experience swelling, redness, or sudden loss of foot shape
 - Symptoms affect your work or daily activities
-

Outlook

Most people with flat feet manage well with **simple measures** such as exercises, footwear advice, and activity modification. Surgery is rarely needed and only considered when conservative treatment has failed.

Self-care tips

- Stay active within comfortable limits
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Gradually increase activity levels
- Replace shoes regularly
- Perform prescribed exercises consistently

If you have concerns or ongoing pain, speak to your physiotherapist or GP for further advice.