Curly Toe in Children

Information for children, parents and carers

Curly Toe in Children

A guide to symptoms, treatment and recovery



Understanding curly toe in children

Curly toe is a common childhood condition in which one or more toes curve downwards or sideways. It often affects a smaller toe and may affect one or both feet. It is usually painless.

Supporting your child

Many mild curly toes need no treatment. Check that shoes are comfortable and watch for rubbing or pain as your child grows. Most children can walk and play normally.

Symptoms and assessment

Understanding the cause and when to seek help

Who is affected?

Curly toes are often noticed in toddlers and young children, especially when barefoot or wearing socks. One or both feet may be affected.

What causes the curl?

It is usually present from birth and relates to the structures controlling toe position, including tendons, ligaments or bones. In most cases it is not linked to other health problems.

Symptoms to watch for

The toe looks curved or twisted and is usually painless. A more marked curl can make shoes uncomfortable. Occasionally, rubbing causes a callus or pressure spot.

Assessment

A doctor or podiatrist usually diagnoses curly toe by examination. X-rays are rarely needed unless the toe is severe or painful.

Comfort comes first

Check toes and shoe fit as your child grows. A painless curly toe often needs observation rather than treatment. Ask for a review if the curve worsens or interferes with walking.

Key message

Many mild curly toes need no treatment. Check that shoes are comfortable and watch for rubbing or pain as your child grows. Most children can walk and play normally.

Treatment and daily care

Activity guided by your child's healthcare team

Before starting activity

There is no fixed exercise routine for every curly toe. Gentle stretching may be suggested in selected cases; ask the clinician to show you what is appropriate.



Activity guidance

Look: check for rubbing, pressure marks or sores.
Footwear: allow space for the toes and check comfort.
Play: usual activities are generally fine when comfortable.
Movement: use gentle stretches only if taught by the clinician.

Important precautions

Never force a toe straight or use a splint without advice. Seek assessment for pain, redness, swelling, sores, worsening curl or difficulty wearing shoes or walking.

Treatment and next steps

Caring for your child and finding support

Mild curly toes

Often no treatment is needed. Some improve naturally with growth. Your clinician may suggest gentle stretching or manipulation in selected cases and should demonstrate this first.

When extra support is needed

Special footwear or a toe splint may be recommended for more significant symptoms. Physiotherapy may help flexibility and reduce pressure problems. Use only the plan recommended for your child.

Is surgery necessary?

Surgery is uncommon and usually considered only when the toe causes pain or interferes with walking. A specialist can explain the options if symptoms persist.

Questions or concerns?

See a doctor or podiatrist if your child has pain, trouble walking or wearing shoes, redness, swelling or sores, or if the curve worsens. Most children remain active and comfortable.

B-Well Physiotherapy Services

0300 303 4811

bwell.mskberkshire@nhs.net

www.bwellberkshire.co.uk