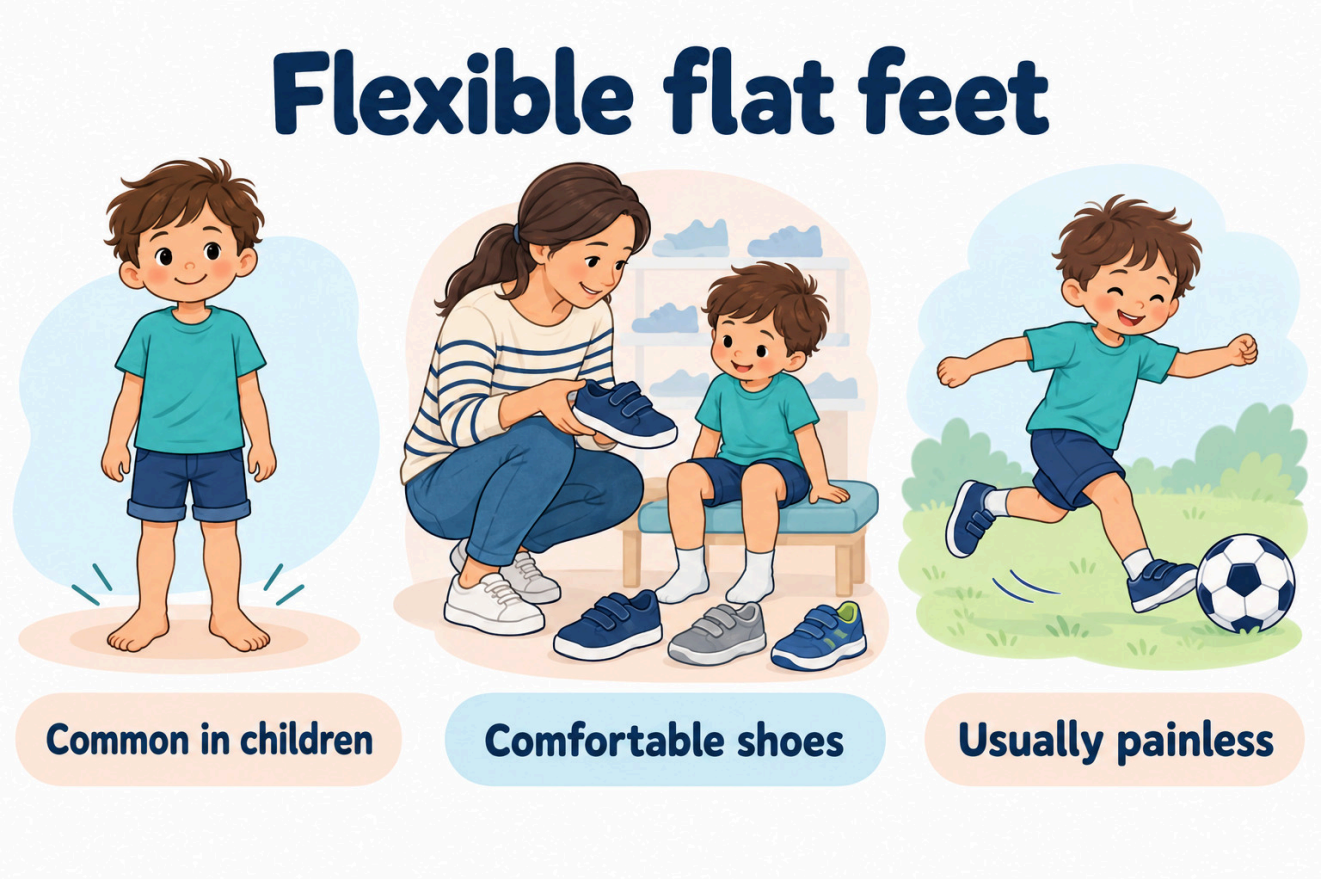
Flexible Flat Feet

Information for children, parents and carers

Flexible Flat Feet

A guide to symptoms, treatment and recovery



Understanding the condition

Flexible flat feet means the arch flattens when standing but returns when sitting, rising onto tiptoes or lifting the heel. This is common in children and usually causes no pain or long-term problems.

Supporting your child

Most children need no treatment. Encourage normal walking, running and play, with comfortable, well-fitting shoes. Seek advice if pain or walking difficulties develop.

Symptoms and assessment

Understanding the cause and when to seek help

Who is affected?

Flexible flat feet are very common in toddlers and young children. One or both feet may be affected, and most children are otherwise healthy.

Why does it happen?

It is often a normal variation in foot development and may run in families. Loose ligaments and flexibility can contribute. Injury or an underlying condition is an uncommon cause.

What might you notice?

The arch disappears while standing and the feet may roll inwards. Most children walk, run and play normally. Occasionally, foot or leg aching or tiredness occurs after activity.

How is it assessed?

A clinician examines the feet and how the arch changes with position. Scans or X-rays are rarely needed unless there is pain, marked deformity or unusual symptoms.

When to arrange a review

Seek advice for pain in the feet, ankles or legs, tiring easily, difficulty walking, swelling or limping. A marked difference between the feet or severe deformity also needs assessment.

Key message

Most children need no treatment. Encourage normal walking, running and play, with comfortable, well-fitting shoes. Seek advice if pain or walking difficulties develop.

Treatment and daily care

Activity guided by your child's healthcare team

Before starting activity

Painless flexible flat feet usually need no exercises or correction. If symptoms occur, a physiotherapist can select foot and leg exercises for your child.



Activity guidance

Activity: encourage normal walking, running and play if comfortable.
Footwear: use well-fitting shoes and check comfort as feet grow.
Symptoms: ask for assessment if pain limits activity.
Exercises: follow the individual programme if one is prescribed.

Important precautions

Do not push through foot or leg pain. Seek review for persistent pain, limping, swelling, difficulty walking or a marked difference between the two feet.

Treatment and next steps

Caring for your child and finding support

When no treatment is needed

Most children with flexible flat feet grow up without problems. Some arches develop as the child grows. Comfortable shoes and normal activity are usually all that is needed.

If discomfort develops

Supportive shoes or orthotic insoles may help relieve symptoms. Your clinician can advise what is suitable. Support is used for comfort when needed; treatment should match your child's symptoms.

Physiotherapy and specialist care

A physiotherapist may prescribe exercises for foot and leg strength if symptoms develop. Surgery is rarely needed and is reserved for severe or persistent problems after specialist assessment.

Questions or concerns?

Arrange assessment for persistent pain, severe deformity, limping, swelling, unusual tiredness or difficulty walking. Most children remain active with monitoring and simple care.

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