

FLATFOOT

What Is Flatfoot?

Flatfoot or medically referred to as pes planus is a condition where there is partial or total collapse (loss) of the arch. This can be flexible ie. arch is present when not weight-bearing or rigid ie. when it remains flat.

Other characteristics of flatfoot may include toe drift, in which the toes and front part of the foot point outward. The heel tilts toward the outside and the ankle appears to turn in. Bunions and hammertoes may develop as a result of a flatfoot.



Types:

Flexible flatfoot is one of the most common types of flatfoot. It typically begins in childhood or adolescence and continues into adulthood. It usually occurs in both feet and progresses in severity throughout the adult years. As the deformity worsens, the soft tissues (tendons and ligaments) of the arch may stretch or tear and can become inflamed.

Adult acquired flatfoot is due to dysfunction of the posterior tibial tendon. This is a tendon in the inner part of the foot and ankle and helps to elevate the middle of the foot giving it an arch. This usually affects a single foot but can affect both. It is a progressive disorder that can become quite painful.

Symptoms:

Symptoms that may occur in some persons with flexible flatfoot include:

- Pain in the heel, arch, ankle or along the outside of the foot
- Rolled-in ankle (overpronation)
- Pain along the shin bone (shin splint)
- General aching or fatigue in the foot or leg
- Low back, hip or knee pain
- Swelling along the inner aspect of the ankle

Diagnosis:

A good examination needs to be done to rule out causes or problems related to a flatfoot. X-rays are usually taken to determine the disorder's severity. There are also different scans that can be done to assess the condition of the tendons, ligaments and joints.

Treatment:

- **Activity modifications.** Cut down on activities that bring you pain and avoid prolonged walking and standing to give your arches a rest.
- **Weight loss.** If you are overweight, try to lose weight. Putting too much weight on your arches may aggravate your symptoms.
- **Orthotic devices or shoe modifications.** Certain insoles can assist in maintaining an arch and preventing outward movement of the heel.
- **Immobilization.** In some cases, it may be necessary to use a walking cast or to completely avoid weightbearing.
- **Medications.** Anti-inflammatories can help with pain of tendon inflammation.
- **Physical therapy.** Ultrasound therapy or other physical therapy modalities may be used to provide temporary relief.
- **Surgery.** When conservative methods fail or don't relieve the symptoms, surgery is the next step. Depending on the state of the deformity, there are many surgical options available to relieve the symptoms and correct the foot function.

References:

www.foothealthfacts.org

www.aofas.org

Pictures: Google images