Pediatric Guide

Foot development and choosing

shoes for your child

Naturino

Shoes from birth onwards

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Pediatric Guide

Everything parents would like to know from specialists

1- The foot and its natural development

The anatomy of the foot

Although we often tend to ignore this part of the body, the foot is an amazingly complex biological system that offers stability and balance to the body while allowing an infinite range of movements such as walking, running and jumping. The well-known saying "starting off on the right foot" is by no means just a cliché. For all these reasons, let us learn more about the foot.

- A foot contains one-fourth of the bones in our entire body: twenty-six bones, which are connected by joints and strengthened by ligaments, allow the foot to adapt easily to different types of terrain
- This extraordinary control is possible thanks to numerous nerve endings that determine sensitivity (to touch, heat and pain) on the surface and deep within the foot, and collect all the information required for walking.
- Deep sensitivity develops between 9 and 12 months, when the child starts walking and prevails over surface sensitivity, which is very active in the infant until the age of 8 months. The foot is therefore both a receptive and support organ.
- In terms of structure, the sole of a healthy foot must provide adequate support so that the body's weight is evenly distributed.
- Toes must be straight and parallel and not bent or crooked.
- The shape and length of the nails must not cause inflammation or irritation.

How much does a healthy foot grow?

At birth the foot is approximately 3 inches and reaches a length of about 9-11 inches at the end of development – often over three times its original size.

- During the first few months of life the foot is only partially ossified and is therefore sensitive even to the slightest constrictions, such as those that might occur from the position of the child when sleeping. It is a good idea therefore to leave feet as free as possible, avoiding the use of socks or booties whenever possible, which should in any case never be tight.
- At the age of one, the foot has grown to a length of 4 ¾ inches and is in its phase of major growth. This is generally when a child starts walking. Until the age of 5, the foot grows over 1/3 of an inch each year. During this phase, children should wear sturdier shoes that help to acquire balance and major stability. Considering that a shoe size corresponds to roughly 1/3 of an inch, it follows that the foot will increase by 5 to 6 shoes sizes until the child is 5 years old.
- It is advisable to measure the foot at least once every 3 months to ensure that the shoes your child is wearing have not become too tight. A shoe must be between ¼ inch and ½ inch longer than the foot to allow for freedom of movement.
- Bear in mind that a correct fit is essential for comfort. A shoe that is too large does not provide sufficient support to the foot, while a tight shoe hinders growth.

2 - Minor foot problems

There are many foot problems and the most serious malformations are visible at birth. Minor defects may however appear later and may be identified by parents.

- One of the most common problems is flat feet. In children **up to the age of three, flat feet are quite normal** because the plantar arch is covered by a layer of fat. You should consult an expert only if this situation persists or if your child has problems walking.

- An **excessively curved plantar** should also be checked because it may represent a problem.
- Parents should pay special attention to alterations of the toes, especially if these run in the family. **Hallux valgus** (deformed big toe) or overlapping toes may be successfully corrected if dealt with promptly.
- Children frequently suffer from **ingrown toenails**, which are mainly caused by incorrect nail cutting or tightly fitting shoes. Often this problem is **caused by poor quality shoes** made of synthetic materials that do not allow the foot to breathe.

3 - Helpful hints

Up to the age of one, **leave your child's feet free**, allowing him to wear only socks or shoes made of very soft leather.

- To stimulate movement, place your child on its back and let him **kick freely**.
- Allow your child to wear his **first real shoes** only when he starts walking.
- **Check the length of the foot** every 2-3 months and ensure that your child is wearing the correct shoe size.
- Select only shoes that are made of **natural, top-quality materials** and clothing that does not hinder movements.
- From the age of 2 or 3 onwards, periodically check your child's feet and toe nails.
- Check how your **child walks** to see if your child is knock-kneed or bow-legged and consult your pediatrician in the case of problems.
- When your child is 3 or 4, take him for a complete orthopedic and podiatric check up.
- Allow your child to wear only conventional training shoes for sports activities.

4 - Your child's shoes

Up to the age of 8 or 9 months your baby's feet are even more sensitive than its hands and it is with his feet that your baby explores the world around him. You should therefore only cover your child's feet when you go outside, to protect them from the cold or from rough surfaces. Only when your child is one should he start wearing his first proper shoe that should have the following characteristics:

- The toe must be wide enough to allow freedom of movement and the toes to wiggle;
- The front of the shoe must be flexible to bend easily by hand to 90°;
- The upper must be made of very soft leather;
- The sole should be flexible and non-slip;
- The back of the shoe should have a sturdy counter to stabilize the heel and prevent twisting sideways;
- The shoe height must not cover the ankle bone to allow ankles to move freely;
- **For no reason whatsoever must the shoe have an "orthopedic sole"**. Only your doctor can identify malformations and prescribe the required corrective measures.

5 - Like walking on sea sand

"Sea sand is the ideal support for the foot". According to accredited podiatric theory, sand, which adapts perfectly to the shape of the foot, is the best possible support for its natural development.

This is why Falc has designed the "Sand effect" bottom, that applies the natural theory of walking on sea sand, reproducing this ideal treading surface even on city streets.

Soft and flexible **Naturino** shoes not only protect the foot but also allow it to develop naturally without needless constrictions.