

# How to Prevent Foot Problems in Kids

*Dr. Rion A. Berg*



Dear Parent,

You want to make sure that your children get the best chance in life. And that includes having robust foot health. While your kids may not have foot problems now, it's important to learn about the kinds of issues that can occur in the future.

Many foot problems are inherited. If you have flat feet, bunions, or plantar fasciitis, your children can inherit your foot type and your foot conditions. Fortunately if you catch problems early, you can prevent your kids from developing them or from getting worse.

I'm Dr. Rion Berg and I've been practicing podiatry for over 40 years. I've raised three children and now I have the good fortune of having a wonderful granddaughter. All of my kids and granddaughter have been very active.

I'd like to help your family keep your children running, jumping, and playing sports.

In this book, you'll learn how your kids' feet develop, how you know you kids have a foot problem, the most common foot problems in kids, how these conditions are treated and prevented.

To your health,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Rion Berg".

Dr. Rion Berg

206-368-7000

## Introduction

At the Foot and Ankle Center of Lake City, we know your child's health is your number one priority. That's why we want to make sure you have all the information you need to help your child's feet develop properly and stay pain free.

Your children's feet serve as the foundation for their entire body. Like adult feet, these complex biomechanical marvels perform a wide range of functions, including supporting body weight, conforming to uneven terrain, aiding balance, and making it possible for kids to walk, skip, hop, run, jump, and more.

However, unlike adult feet, children's feet aren't fully formed; they're made of soft cartilage that gradually converts to bone and doesn't reach maturity until between the ages of 13 and 15 for girls, and 15 and 18 for boys.



## How Your Kid's Feet Develop

During a child's first year, their feet are soft, supple, with plenty of fat on their foot soles. Bones are still very flexible, and they don't have arches. Their feet grow and change shape rapidly.

At around age one, when your child starts to walk the arch develops, the feet get stronger, and the feet grow in length and width. No shoes are needed when indoors and only lightweight, flexible footwear should be worn outside.

## When Should Arches Form?

Most kid's feet start to form arches by age three. If your child is four or five years old and they haven't formed an arch, it's important to bring them in for an examination. Some adult foot conditions start in childhood, so giving your kids the best foot care early in life can help them in the future.

## Can My Kids Inherit My Foot Problems?

Yes! Although we often hear that kids outgrow their foot problems, this isn't always the case. If you have foot problems such as flat feet, bunions, heel pain, or other physical issues such as back, knee, or hip pain it's more likely for your child to have them as well.



## Should I Schedule My Child for A Foot Screening?

Yes! If you have foot or musculoskeletal problems and your child still has flat feet by age four or five, it's important to bring them in for a foot screening. Even if they aren't having obvious foot pain, they could still be experiencing other problems. Getting your kids the help they need early can prevent them from developing future foot problems.

## How Do I Know If My Child Has a Foot Problem?

While pain is often the biggest clue your child is having a foot issue, it's not the only thing to pay attention to.

It's important to be concerned if:

- Your child can't keep up with their peers
- Your child withdraws from activities they usually enjoy
- Your child does not want to show you their feet
- Your child often trips and falls
- Your child often asks to be carried after walking short distances
- Your child has unusual walking patterns
- Your child complains of pain in their lower legs

These are all clues something might be wrong. Make an appointment with your podiatrist if you notice these things occurring.

## What Else Should I Be Watching For?

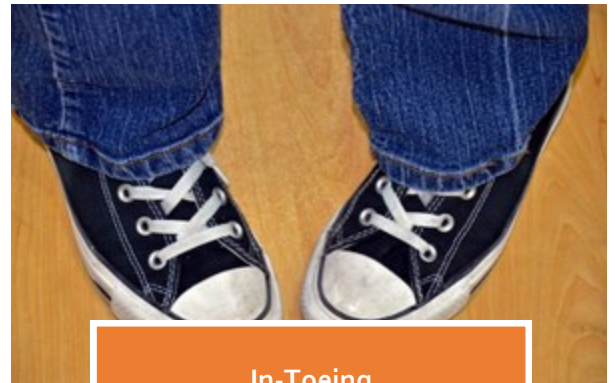
Kids will have different foot problems at different ages. Here are some of the most common symptoms to look out for by age.

### Ages 1-5

- Flat feet
- Toe-walking
- In-Toeing/Out-Toeing
- Coordination
- Foot alignment
- Balance
- Fatigue

### Ages Six and Older

- Knee or shin pain
- Poor posture or knocked knees
- Heel pain
- Stress fractures
- Ankle pain or ankle instability



In-Toeing



## What Are the Most Common Foot Conditions in Children?

Now that you know the signs and symptoms to watch for, here are the most common foot conditions we treat in children.

### **Ingrown Toenails**

As you may know, having an ingrown toenail can be extremely painful. If your kid says they have a painful toe, bring them in so we can determine if it's ingrown.

Risk factors in younger children and teens include repetitive activity such as kicking a soccer ball, wearing shoes that are too tight, and cutting toenails improperly.



### **Plantar Warts**

Bumps on the bottom of your kid's feet are most likely plantar warts. Caused by the human papilloma virus (HPV), they spread easily. If your child has them it's best to catch them early to keep pain at bay.

### **Sport's Injuries**

Just like adults, kids can be vulnerable to sports injuries, both acute and chronic. Kids who are very active can experience sprains, fractures, and torn ligaments. More common are chronic or overuse injuries like Achilles tendonitis, heel pain, and stress fractures.

### **Heel Pain**

When children develop heel pain it's more likely to be a condition called Sever's Disease rather than plantar fasciitis—but kids can develop both.

#### ***Sever's disease***

This condition is caused by overuse and stress on the heel bone. When the heel plate has not fully closed, muscle strain and inflamed tissue can result. Kids most likely to get this condition are soccer players and other very active children ages 10-15 in boys and 8-13 in girls.



#### ***Plantar Fasciitis***

Young kids and older teens can also develop plantar fasciitis. Flat feet, increased activity, and tight calf muscles can all lead to this condition.

### **Fungal Toenails**

Kids can also develop fungal toenails. The best thing you can do is to get them treated early. That way you'll have the greatest chance of success.

## How to Prevent to Your Child From Developing Foot Pain

While we have many treatments for foot problems, it's best to prevent your children from developing foot issues in the first place. Here are some easy things you can do to help.

- Make sure your kids have the right shoes so they're less likely to experience foot pain. Here are ["6 Shoe Shopping Tips for Your Kids"](#).
- Cut your kids toenails straight across to prevent ingrown toenails.
- Provide them with flip flops or other shower shoes to prevent them from walking barefoot at the pool or in locker rooms to prevent them from acquiring [plantar warts](#) or toenail fungus.
- If you notice your child has flat feet, has an unusual gait, or is experiencing any of the signs discussed earlier, bring them to your podiatrist before they develop foot pain.

Don't wait to resolve your child's foot pain! Call us today and we'll get them into the office in 2 weeks or less and same day for an emergency. Our number is 206-368-7000 or [request an appointment online](#).



"Dr. Berg did everything he could to ensure my child's comfort.  
My child said, "I LOVED that doctor!"

-Jessica R.

**FOOT AND ANKLE CENTER OF LAKE CITY**

