

Some Tips for Baby Feet

Any shoes for pre-walkers are really just glorified socks. And some of them are quite fun! Just make sure they aren't too small, as their toes could be constricted.

Similarly, check that the socks aren't too tight around the toes.

If you have a long baby, check that the baby-grows have enough room for the toes to stretch out. If not, just trim the end off them and put socks on your baby's feet instead.

We ♥ Second Hand - but our feet don't.

Just like car seats and mattresses, you shouldn't put your child into second hand shoes.

They will have been worn in by a differently shaped foot, the fit mightn't be right anyway and there's a risk of spreading fungal infections or verrucae.

There are possibly some exceptions. Shoes that never fit very well anyway, such as wellies and clogs, might be fine if they are nearly new. And if cost is an issue, it is better to put your child into a correctly sized second hand shoe than keep them in ones that are too big or too small.

FINALLY - and this is IMPORTANT: get real. If letting your toddler wear Peppa Pig wellies to preschool is the only way to prevent a tantrum, then go with it. If they have only just learned to put their shoes on, and they're on the wrong feet - it's not the end of the world. Rules can be broken for special occasions - save the unsupportive sparkly shoes for parties. As with anything, being mostly good most of the time is still pretty good!

Independence is great, albeit sometimes rather time consuming ...



To get the shoes on the right feet, try this:

put stickers on your child's shoes. Either inside, like they are here (tiny Peppa and George pigs, can you spot them?) or on the outside. Teach your children that the shoes need to be lined up with the stickers next to each other before they're put on.



Footwear advice for Babies, Toddlers and Children



01223 782161
www.pennfarmpodiatry.co.uk

3A Penn Farm Studios
Harston Road
Haslingfield
Cambridge
CB23 1JZ

What are shoes for? Shoes protect feet, they stop us treading on bits of glass and sticks and stones. But - the big downside of shoes is that you can't feel what your feet are doing nearly so well (a reduction in sensory feedback). To make up for this, shoes have to give us something "extra" to compensate. This could be extra support or additional cushioning.

Do no harm!!! Chinese foot binding is a good example of how fragile growing feet are.

So - get shoes that fit.

Does the Shoe Fit?

Everyone needs about a thumb's width of space between the end of their **LONGEST** toe (this might actually be the second one) and the end of the shoe. Remember that a child's thumb would be smaller than an adults!

The top of the foot shouldn't be pushing against the top of the shoe. You should be able to "roll" or "pinch" the leather that is over the toes and forefoot.



If the shoe insole can be removed, getting your child to stand on it is a great way to help judge shoe fit (these shoes are too short).

Shoes that are **TOO BIG** are nearly as bad as shoes that are too small.



Be careful getting shoes for your child to "grow into". It is better to get cheaper shoes that fit, and change the size more often, than to try to get a lot of wear out of a more expensive pair.

A fastening mechanism is important. Laces, buckles, a velcro strap ... something that keeps the shoe secured on properly. **WHY?** Otherwise the foot will slide forward in the shoe, the toes get squished and the heel slips up and down. This is why podiatrists suggest avoiding ballet pumps.

What about cushioning?

Who doesn't love podgy toddler feet! These aren't feet that typically need extra cushioning. So long as the shoes aren't leather soled or particularly hard underneath, don't worry too much about this.

What is a supportive shoe?

Aim for a shoe that's reasonably firm around the heel and a sole that's fairly solid too - that is, you shouldn't be able to get the toe to touch the heel. **BUT ...** they should still bend at the ball of the foot. If they don't, sit with them for 5-10 minutes and bend them (at the ball of the foot, not the middle) to help break them in. Good support is less important than good fit and a fastening mechanism, though, so focus on those first.

GO NATURAL

Socks should be mostly made out of natural fibres such as wool, cotton or bamboo. They will always have a little bit of nylon to add strength. Make sure they are the correct size and don't restrict the toes. **Shoes should be made out of leather.**

But HOW natural should they be?

Should my child be barefooted?

I am asked this all the time. Think back to my first point on what shoes are actually for. Consider what your child is walking on. Barefoot in the house is good, be careful out in the garden where your child might tread on a stone or a bee and obviously shoes will be needed when out and about on footpaths and in shops and playgrounds.

Buy your child's first proper shoes when he or she is regularly walking outside.



But my child LOVES their wellies!

Wellies are essential for splashing in puddles and clogs are great for running under the sprinkler in the garden. But both would be inappropriate for a long walk. Think about what activity your child is doing and pick the best footwear accordingly. Encourage them to wear more appropriate shoes when they are doing a lot of walking, running, scooting or biking.

