

## ~ PUT YOUR KIDS' FEET FIRST ~

### This Summer Get Your Children's Feet Checked B - 4 - U Buy Their Back-to-School Shoes

#### *"As The Twig Is Bent, So The Tree Will Grow"*

is a common phrase I use all the time to describe children's growing feet to concerned parents and grandparents.

I'm passionate about children's health and even more direct with advice when explaining to parents how their children walk (their gait) and how their feet grow.

It's important to examine *HOW children's feet grow over the years*. Ideally if possible document the walking pattern on a computer program for yearly comparison, and then, if necessary, recommend specific children's exercises and/or foot supports (orthotics) that can be used to mould their growing feet.

Getting foot growth to be "as close to perfect alignment as possible" should be the ultimate goal. For this reason, examining children's feet in their early years (age 4 – 18) is imperative and I consider it serious business.

Each year we take our children to their dentist to have their teeth checked, cleaned and perhaps even get expensive braces. So why not spend the same attention to their growing feet? Feet are equally as important to examine on a yearly basis, especially for children in the summer months when parents are buying back-to-school shoes.

**Foot problems at the "bottom of the totem pole" can adversely affect "the top of the totem pole"**. Little problems in little feet can cause a "chain reaction" of symptoms including knee, hip, back pain and even headaches later in life. These can be prevented with a simple foot and



gait check-up done with a qualified practitioner.

The under developed, small bones of children's feet are completely different from those of adults. At first, all babies' feet look flat because an arch hasn't formed yet. Soft tissue and fat pads are the main components and there is no real structure or developing arch until the first 18 months.

From then on, things change very quickly. From 18 months to 6 years of age, rapid developmental changes take place in the feet and arches. And unknown to most parents, the "growth plates" in **children's bones do not finish closing until at least age 15 – 17 in boys and age 13 – 15 in girls, or even later.**

Then add in growth spurts, weight gains, hormonal changes, and a variety of different competitive sports. ALL can lead to very significant developmental foot changes, and your kid's feet may not even hurt at all!

This explains why over 80% of people beyond the age of 20, from children to seniors, have some form of foot problem.

**Children's flat feet, knock knees, running problems, leg cramps, pigeon toes and bow legs are some of the common signs** that parents bring their children in for check-ups.

A biomechanical evaluation of their children's feet by a qualified health practitioner is what is needed.

Qualified professionals are chiropractors, podiatrists and chiropodists. Examining children's feet, as well as adult feet and walking patterns is what we all do.

Doctors identify **"The 5 RED FLAGS"** for potential foot problems. They are (1) foot flare during gait (2) bowed Achilles tendons (3) internal knee rotation (4) low medial arches and (5) excessive shoe wear. These are potential indicators that something may be wrong.

Some health practitioners use plaster casting, some use foam casting and some use computerized technology for evaluations.

Each has its merits and many practitioners are passionate about their methods, arguing pro and con. I personally prefer a combination of plaster and computerized methods.



There are a number of computerized programs available to doctors. I use the FOOTMAXX system, which is a state-of-the-art computer that measures the foot IN MOTION as it bears the weight of walking.

There are 1024 tiny sensors in the pressure force plate mat that takes 40 picture frames per second. With this digital information of precise measurements, and the doctor's expertise, important clues are obtained which otherwise may have been overlooked by many parents and doctors alike.

In summary, remember that the average pair of feet contains 52 bones, 66 joints, 38 muscles and more than 200 ligaments. The feet are engineering miracles! Children's feet need good care, to do the good job of supporting them, for the rest of their lives.

For 27 years, as our way of community service and giving back to the police community, during the months of July – September, myself and my team of kinesiologists will examine all children ages 4 – 18. No child will be turned away.

Helping Kids grow straight, tall and be confident in their walk is the goal. So put your kid's feet first, and take that "Extra Step" for their better health!

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