

Toe Walking

- Toe walking is where the heel makes little or no contact with the floor when standing or walking. This can be intermittent or constant. It is common in young children when they are learning to walk and usually resolves naturally, but occasionally children continue to walk on their toes as they get older.
- It does not usually cause pain or discomfort but can lead to the calf muscles becoming tight.
- The most common cause is habitual. However, it may also be due to children liking the sensation of being up on their tiptoes or rarely due to an underlying neurological or developmental condition.
- It is more common in boys than girls.

Activities to help discourage toe walking

- Prompt your child to walk slowly and put their heels down when walking and standing
- Good fitting supportive shoes or boots to maintain a good foot position; heavier shoes will help to discourage toe walking.
- The main aim is to maintain muscle length in the calf muscle to prevent tightness developing.

Stretches for children under 6 years old



Position your child lying on their back with your hand stabilising their knee. Place your other hand around their heel with your palm along the length of the foot and gently push the foot upwards. Ensure that the ankle does not roll in or out. Hold for 30 seconds, repeat 3 times each side.



Position your child sitting against a wall with their legs out in front of and their back straight. Ensure that their knees are kept straight and feet point upright.

Repeat this daily whilst reading a book or watching their favourite TV programme.

Stretches for children over 6 years



Stand on a step with both of your hands on the wall and heels off the back of the step. Ensure that your knees are straight and both feet point forwards.
Hold for 30 seconds. Repeat 3 times.



Position yourself sitting against a wall with your legs out in front of you and your back straight. Ensure that your knees are kept straight, and your feet point upright.

Aim to hold whilst watching a programme or reading a book. Ideally 30 minutes daily.

Strengthening activities



With your child in standing. Blow bubbles onto the ground in front of the child. Instruct the child to stomp on the bubbles. Encourage the child to alternate the leg that they stomp with.



Position your child in a squatting position with toys on the floor in front of them. Instruct and encourage the child to reach for and play with toys while maintaining the squatting position.



Position your child in front of a toy that encourages squatting. Instruct and encourage the child to play with the toys while maintaining the squatting position.



Position your child in front of a row of buckets. Instruct and encourage the child to step into and out of the buckets.



Position your child standing on a steep slope such as a slippery slide. Practice walking slowly up the slope. Ensure that their back heel remains down and their back leg is kept as straight as possible.



Position your child on their hands and feet with their bottom in the air. Practice `bear-walking` forwards along the floor.

When to seek advice:

- If you child is not able to put their heels down at all even when prompted
- They are losing range of movement and cannot achieve a right-angle position in their ankle
- If the toe walking is only on one side
- If they are experiencing pain

If you need any further support, please contact our advice line on 01923 470680 option 3 to discuss it with the physiotherapy team.