

2009 Podiatrists Keep America Walking Key Messages



- The American Podiatric Medical Association's (APMA) "Podiatrists Keep America Walking" campaign raises awareness among pediatricians and parents alike about the various foot conditions that can affect infants and children and a podiatrist's role in diagnosing and treating those conditions.
- Shortly after birth, a thorough examination of a newborn's feet should be conducted. In addition to checking for all 10 toes, a baby's hips should be checked to make sure they are not dislocated and that there is a neurological response by tickling the bottom of the infant's foot. If foot problems are detected, a child should be referred to an APMA member podiatrist for diagnosis and treatment immediately.
- Some foot deformities can be present at birth and should be treated shortly thereafter. Most treatments include conservative measures, such as observation, stretching, and splinting, while others may need surgical correction. To locate a podiatrist specializing in pediatric foot care in your area, visit apma.org and click on "Find a Podiatric Physician."
- When a child first begins to walk, shoes are not necessary indoors. When walking outside or on rough surfaces, babies' feet should be protected in lightweight, flexible footwear made of natural materials. To locate footwear products appropriate for infants and children that have been awarded APMA's Seal of Acceptance, visit www.apma.org/sealofacceptance.
- Periodic foot examinations should be conducted during the child's first few years of life. Neglecting foot health incites problems in other parts of the body, such as the legs and back. Children should have their feet checked by a podiatrist shortly after they begin to walk, especially if there is a family history of foot problems. According to an APMA survey conducted on 620 parents with children under the age of 18, only 25 reported taking their children to see podiatrist for their foot problems
- A child's feet grow rapidly during their first year of life, reaching almost half their adult size. This first year of life is considered one of the most important in foot development. Full foot development usually takes place between the ages of 18 to 23 years old.
- Many children never complain about foot pain and other foot problems—especially when playing a sport. It is critical that parents watch for a child's limping or difficulty walking during non-sport activities.
- If a child is involved in a sport, it is very important to make sure they wear a shoe developed specifically for the sport. The cheapest shoe is not necessarily the best. Never buy a shoe with the intention that the child will "grow into it," as this can lead to tripping. Always have your child's foot measured before buying shoes.
- Some of the most common foot problems mothers-to-be may face are swelling, cramping, foot flattening or over pronation and plantar fasciitis. Weight gain, impeded blood circulation and hormonal changes are all factors that can impact the feet during pregnancy. In fact, hormones released to increase the flexibility of the birth canal can also cause the feet to expand in size. For some women, the change in foot size can be permanent. Consult with an APMA member podiatrist to discuss treatment options during pregnancy. To find a podiatrist in your area, visit www.apma.org.

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