

HELPING YOU MAKE INFORMED CHOICES...

FOOTWEAR FOR CHILDREN



WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT CHILDREN'S FEET AND FOOTWEAR?

Feet change a lot throughout infancy, childhood and adolescence. Initially they are very soft and flat but change over time as foot bones grow and arches develop. There is still a lot that we need to learn about children's feet but everyone agrees that footwear is important. This is often a cause of anxiety for parents and this guide will respond to questions asked by parents.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

There is no 'best time' for your child to start wearing shoes -think about what your child needs and the purpose of the shoes. Before your child is walking, barefoot is thought to be preferable for foot development. Whilst indoors, this is unlikely to cause any harm and will help your child enjoy exploring. Footwear choices early on are typically fashion-related but footwear can provide warmth and protection outside. It is important at any age that shoes and hosiery fit your child's feet to allow movement and growth.

When you decide that shoes are required, it is important that you consider:

- 👉 What are the shoes for? Some shoes are very soft and offer little protection, whereas others (such as some trainers) can offer lots of protection for feet.
- 👉 Ensure the shoes offer the required support. For example, very soft shoes would not be ideal for those starting to walk, but very stiff shoes could make walking more difficult

👉 Tight clothing (e.g. socks and baby grows) and poorly fitting footwear can affect

foot development

👉 Like every other aspect of child development, regular monitoring and care of your child's feet is important

👉 It is important to seek professional guidance on measuring your child's feet. Once you understand what you need to measure, you can use an app or measuring gauge to take regular measurements.





There are many features of the shoe to think about:

↳ The shape of the shoe should match the shape of the foot. Footwear should not restrict development.

↳ A fastening, such as a lace/Velcro strap, will prevent shoes from slipping (which may cause rubbing and toe pressure) and minimise the risk of tripping.

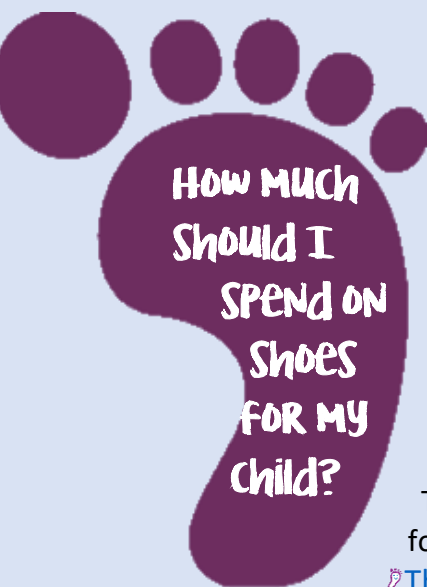
↳ Shoes should not be too heavy but still offer support for the foot, particularly around the middle and back of the shoe.

↳ Fashion trends copying adult footwear are best avoided if they don't have the important features mentioned above.

↳ Several well-known high street footwear stores and many independent retailers will measure feet first to recommend length and width fittings. Whatever store you choose, make sure the staff measure your child's feet when they are standing and with a measurement device.

If you need any further advice about your child's shoes or have any concerns speak to a health professional (such as a podiatrist).

For further information, see some additional resources below.



It is not necessarily about how much you spend on your child's shoes. Expensive shoes which don't have the features to support your child's feet could be a waste of money. Also, children (especially early in childhood) are going to grow out of their shoes very quickly so it is better to find shoes that fit the recommendations at a reasonable price so that you can change them often enough. We advise against wearing shoes that have been worn by someone else.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

To help inform your choices you may find the following useful:

↳ [The College of Podiatry](#)

↳ [The Association of Paediatric Chartered Physiotherapists](#)

↳ [Children's Foot Health Register](#)

WHAT WILL WE ADD TO THE UNDERSTANDING IN THIS AREA?

Over the next 5 years, Great Foundations will be doing research to understand parental views related to children's foot health and investigate what health and industry professionals know and think about children's feet. We will also be researching how children's feet develop as they learn to walk.



Great Foundations is a collaborative initiative being led by the Universities of Salford and Brighton.

The research hopes to provide a major leap forward in the quality of knowledge and understanding of children's foot health.

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