

MAKE INFORMED CHOICES... WALKING DEVELOPMENT

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT WALKING DEVELOPMENT?



How babies 'find their feet' and learn to move around without your help is different for every baby. Some babies crawl, then walk, while others miss out some of these stages all together. Either way, developmental changes in the feet start long before they can balance or walk. Even an awareness of their feet such as grasping for them, pulling on them, stamping, means babies feet are changing even before they can walk. These little structures become the 'balance board' for the rest of the body once they're strong enough.

Babies FIRST STEPS TO WALKING

FINDING THEIR FEET

At around 4 months old babies will start to 'find their feet' and enjoy grasping for them. Soon after, they will kick their legs and push their feet into your tummy and against hard surfaces, causing muscles and bones to continually develop as they use them in various ways. At the same time, babies become stronger all over and they learn to sit up and support themselves in an upright position.



GET UP AND GET MOVING



As their feet and legs get stronger, they use them to move around and direct themselves whilst on their belly or by crawling on their hands and knees. During this time, the muscles and bones in the feet are developing to support the body.

STAND UP. STAND OUT. STAND TALL.

Once strong and more coordinated, babies begin to use furniture and other props to pull themselves up. They will fall down over and over, but keep practicing until they are able to pull up to standing with support. This is the first stage where they take their whole-body weight through their feet, and after this it's often a quick transition! From this stage the foot begins to take weight, and interact with the ground.



CRUISE CONTROL

After babies can balance, they will begin to learn how to use their feet. Cruising usually begins as a sideways movement along supports such as furniture, and babies will be able to take steps with help. They will appear to have flat feet – but this is expected as the bones in their feet haven't fully developed, and the muscles are still learning to take the whole weight of the body, with the body in different upright positions.



DON'T STOP ME NOW!

From here, they begin to take what appears to be awkward steps, with a stiff legged motion, placing their arms out in front to help them balance. During this time, the bones in the feet are still developing, and will continue to do so until around the age of 7.



SUMMARY

With this overview we hope we have provided you with some information regarding the very early development of baby's feet. While the bones of the foot take a while to harden into their natural shape, the muscles are working tirelessly to ensure this process from very early in their life – even before they crawl. That babies 'find their feet', before their feet find them, shows how important the relationship between each baby and their feet is.

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.

GET IN TOUCH



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