

Children's Therapy Services

Referring Young Children with Gait Anomalies to Physiotherapy



There are a number of common foot and lower limb deformities seen in children. Occasionally, presenting symptoms are 'Red Flags', warning signs that there may be underlying pathology present. Some advice is given below on when and when not to refer children presenting with some of the most common gait anomalies, to a physiotherapist.



Tip Toe Walking

Yes, please refer ('Red Flag')

- If the toe walking is persistent.
- If there is associated developmental delay.
- If the child is unable to squat or stand with their heel/heels on the floor (e.g. tightness of calf muscle).
- If the child is over 2 year and is unable to stand from floor sitting without using their hands (2 year +).
- If the toe walking is asymmetrical.

No, referral is not necessary

- If the toe walking is intermittent
- If the child is able to squat to play on the floor and is able to keep their heels on the floor (e.g. no tightness of calf muscle).

Flat Feet (Pes Planas)

It is normal for babies and toddlers to have 'flat feet' due to the presence of fatty tissue on the soles of their feet. This persists until approximately four year of age.

Yes, please refer

- If there is associated pain in the lower limbs.
- If there are signs of pressure on the foot (blistering).
- If the longitudinal arch does not form normally, when the child stands on tip-toe.
- If the foot is stiff.

NB In all of the above cases, it may be considered more appropriate to refer the child to a podiatrist for advice.

No, referral is not necessary

- If the baby or toddler is under four-years of age.
- If the longitudinal arch forms normally, when the child stands on tip-toe.

Pes Cavus

This is the opposite of flat feet and it is when the arch is extremely pronounced. It is rarely seen and is usually indicative of a neurological cause, thus a referral to a paediatric neurologist or paediatrician is the most appropriate action to take.

Knock Knees (Genu Valgum)

This is when a child stands with their knees together and their ankles at least 2.5 cm apart.

A gap of 6-7 cm between the ankles is normal between the ages of two and four years.

Knock knees usually resolve spontaneously approximately by the age of six years.

Yes, please refer

- If the problem is associated with pain in the lower limbs.

No, referral is not necessary

- If the child is under the age of six and the problem does not result in any pain.

Bow Legs (Genu Varus)

This is when there is a small gap between a child's knees and the ankles when standing with the feet together. This is normally seen in children until the age of two years. Physiotherapy referral is generally not appropriate.

Yes, please refer

- If there is associated pain in the lower limbs.

In-toeing (Pigeon-toed)

In-toeing is a variation of normal and is particularly common in toddlers. It is generally due to an excessive twist of the thigh or shin bones. Usually this twist will spontaneously resolve and naturally unwind itself as the child grows and the musculoskeletal system matures, normally by the age of ten years.

Insoles and exercises will not speed up the unwinding process and surgery is rarely, if ever, required – and certainly not under the age of ten years. Thus, physiotherapy referral is not usually appropriate .

Red Flags

- If asymmetric hip range of movement and unequal hip creases are present please consider a hip x-ray to investigate any underlying pathology.
- If there is any associated development delay or any functional limitations caused by the in-toeing please consider referral to physiotherapy.

Out-toeing

This is when a child's feet point outwards. As with in-toeing, this condition will usually resolve spontaneously and thus referral to physiotherapy is generally not necessary.

Curly / Crossed Toes

If this condition presents with pain, please refer to your local orthopaedic surgeon as physiotherapy and podiatry will not help.

Thank you for reading these Guidelines. If you have any further questions or wish to discuss the appropriateness of a referral, please do not hesitate to contact your local physiotherapy department for advice.
This is only for children resident in Calderdale or Huddersfield.

NHS at Broad Street Plaza
Northgate
Halifax HX1 1UB
Telephone No: 01422 261340

Children's Therapy Services
Princess Royal Health Centre
Greenhead Road
Huddersfield HD1 4EW
Telephone No: 01484 344299

If you have any comments about this leaflet or the service you have received you can contact :

NHS at Broad Street Plaza
Telephone No: 01422 261340

If you would like this information in another format or language contact the above.

Potřebujete-li tyto informace v jiném formátu nebo jazyce,
obraťte se prosím na výše uvedené oddělení

Jeżeli są Państwo zainteresowani otrzymaniem tych
informacji w innym formacie lub wersji językowej,
prosimy skontaktować się z nami, korzystając z ww.
danych kontaktowych

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਪ੍ਰਾਸ਼ੁਪ ਜਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿੱਚ ਲੈਣਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ,
ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਉਪਰੋਕਤ ਵਿਭਾਗ ਵਿੱਚ ਸਾਡੇ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور فارمیٹ کی زبان میں درکار ہوں، تو
برائے مہربانی مندرجہ بالا شعبے میں ہم سے رابطہ کریں۔

"إذا احتجت الحصول على هذه المعلومة بشكل مغاير أو مترجمة إلى لغة مختلفة فيرجى منك الاتصال بالقسم
المذكور أعلاه"