

Are foot orthoses effective for treating paediatric flat feet?

Clinical Question	How effective and safe are foot orthoses as treatment for paediatric flat feet versus no treatment or other treatment?
Bottom Line	<p>This Cochrane review concluded that there is no evidence to support the efficacy of foot orthoses (FO) for children with asymptomatic (painless) flat feet.</p> <p>Further, the evidence across four decades remains very limited, with ill-defined conclusions about foot orthoses for treating paediatric flat feet.</p> <p>Very-low to low-certainty evidence from two studies evaluating the effectiveness of FOs for foot and ankle pain in children with juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA) found inconclusive evidence on the benefits of foot orthoses on pain, child- and parent-rated quality of life, quality of life, or withdrawals due to adverse events.</p> <p>Whilst less frequent, children with painful flat feet are directed to use low-cost prefabricated FOs with well-selected footwear. Footwear, a given influence for FOs, is demonstrated to alter gait and foot mobility, and hence requires regard in both clinical and research settings. Available normative foot posture data, triage principles, and wider diagnoses must be considered before any intervention occurs.</p> <p>Given the lack of difference between the low-cost prefabricated FOs and the expensive customised FOs, and the benefits of early treatment, clinicians may consider immediate use of prefabricated FOs for JIA foot and ankle pain. JIA is indisputably consequential, and many children experience disabling foot and lower limb pathology despite best available pharmaceutical measures.</p>
Caveat	None of the included studies provided high quality evidence for any outcome. Two studies were found to be of moderate quality evidence. The remainder of the studies were rated as low and very low quality of evidence across all outcomes.
Context	Paediatric flat feet are a common presentation in primary care; reported prevalence approximates 15%. A minority of flat feet can hurt and limit gait. There is no optimal strategy, nor consensus, for using foot orthoses (FOs) to treat paediatric flat feet.
Cochrane Systematic Review	Evans AM, Rome K, Carroll M, Hawke F. Foot orthoses for treating paediatric flat feet. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2022, Issue 1. Art. No.: CD006311. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD006311.pub3. This review contains 16 trials with a total of 1058 children (aged 11 months to 19 years).

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Systematic review link:

<https://www.cochranelibrary.com/cdsr/doi/10.1002/14651858.CD006311.pub3/full>