

Idiopathic Toe Walking

What is it?

Idiopathic toe walking is when a child walks on their tip toes and there is no medical reason for it. Toe walking can be a variation of normal walking development, and many children outgrow this by the time they are 2-3 years of age. We don't know why some children prefer to walk on their toes.



We do know that idiopathic toe walkers:

- Usually do this on both sides
- Can usually move and play just like their friends
- Can stand with their feet flat when they are still
- May have a family member who walked on their toes

Why Might it be a Concern?

Toe walking can cause the muscles in the back of the legs to become tight. This can make it harder for the ankle to move normally. It also may cause the muscles in the front of the legs to become weak because they don't get used as much. Toe walking can also make a child less steady on their feet, which may lead to ankle twists and sprains.

How is it Treated?

Treatment depends on each individual child and their situation. A high-top shoe that has some stiffness in the sole might help keep your child's heels down.

Other treatment approaches may include:

- Stretching and strengthening exercises
- Orthotic bracing
- Repeated casting to stretch tight muscles
- Medicine injected into the muscles at the back of the legs
- Surgery to lengthen the tight muscles (only in very serious cases)

When Should I Get Advice and Help?

- Toe walking persists past 2-3 years of age
- Your child toe walks more than 75% of the time
- Your child is only toe walking on one foot
- Your child has other motor delays
- Your child has pain because of the toe walking

Toe walking without other medical problems is usually not serious, and children usually outgrow this tendency on their own. A Physiotherapist can do an assessment to rule out other reasons for toe walking and can recommend treatment approaches that are right for you child.



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