

In summary

- As children grow and get heavier, their toes usually spread out and do not cause any problems.
- Most curly toes either get better on their own or do not cause any further issues.

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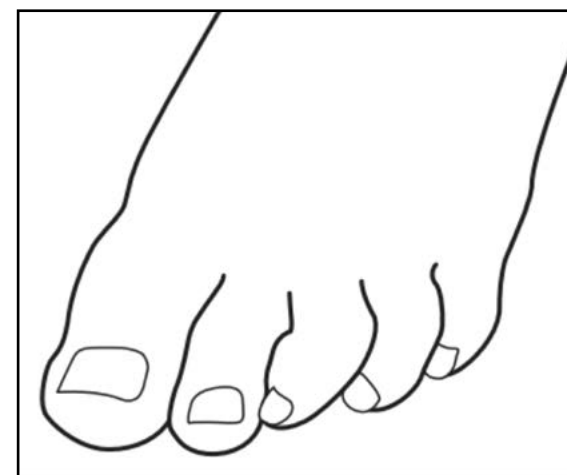
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Information for parents and children about

Curly Toes



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Information and advice on curly toes

What are curly toes?

Curly toes are common and often present at birth. They become more noticeable when a child starts walking. It mostly affects the third, fourth, and fifth toes on one or both feet.

Why do they occur?

The movement of our toes is controlled by tendons, which are bands of tissue that run from the ankle to the tips of the toes. Curly toes usually happen when these tendons are too tight, pulling a toe under the next one. It's unclear why tendons tighten, but it might run in families, or happen during fast growth.

What are the symptoms of curly toes?

The main sign of curly toes is that one or more toes curl under the next toe. Most children and adults do not have any problems because of their curly toes.

Sometimes, children might feel rubbing or pain. They might also develop hard skin on the bottom of the foot. Parents might have trouble finding shoes that fit well.

Long term outcomes

Curly toes usually do not need treatment and they do not affect walking or running. In the past, strapping or taping for babies was used, but recent research shows this does not help.

What can you do?

One simple way is to stretch the toes out straight when drying them after a bath. Toe spacers from a pharmacy or online may help keep the toes apart and prevent rubbing. However, young children might not like wearing them.

Make sure your child wears supportive shoes that fit well and allow room for the toes. Some older children might benefit from special insoles in their shoes.



When to see your GP

- If the toes rub or cause blisters, calluses, or ingrown nails.
- Your GP might refer you to a specialist called an orthopaedic surgeon.
- The surgeon may suggest an operation to release the tight tendon.
- In very rare cases, if all the toes curl tightly and the arch of the foot is very high, it might be caused by a neurological problem. This would need an MRI scan.
- Treatment for this is different from curly toes and depends on the exact cause.