

# FLAT FOOT

## WHAT IS FLAT FOOT?

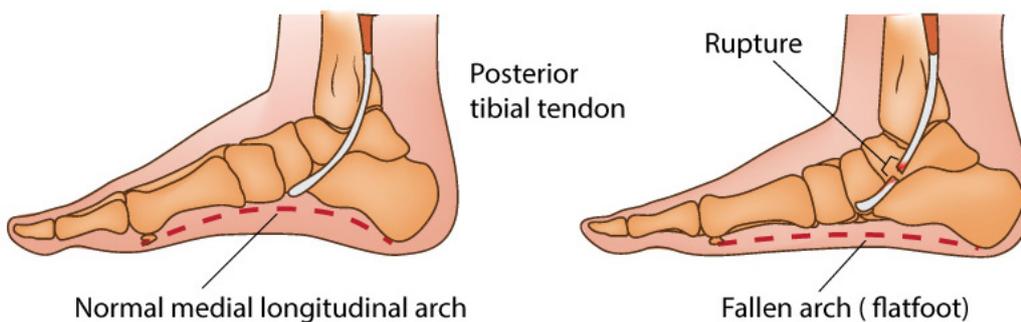
Flat Foot is the term used when the foot loses its normal arch, appearing flat against the ground. It is a complex process that involves problems with the tibialis posterior (TP) tendon, the spring ligament and the hindfoot joints.

The TP tendon is a large, important tendon that helps to hold up the arch of the foot and it can either tear or become damaged over many years. For this reason Flat Foot can also be called Posterior Tibial Tendon Dysfunction (PTTD) or Adult Acquired Flatfoot Deformity (AAFD).

The spring ligament is also important for maintaining the arch of the foot because it acts as a sling between the hindfoot and the midfoot. This, in conjunction with a torn or damaged TP, causes the joints to lose their normal alignment and thus the foot goes flat and can be very painful.

## SYMPTOMS

- Pain may commence along the inside of the foot in the early stages and progress to the outside of the foot under the ankle in the later stages.
- The foot flattens and turns outwards.
- Joints around the heel may become arthritic, leading to further stiffness and pain.



## WHAT IMAGING IS NEEDED?

You need to have an X-ray whilst standing to accurately assess the severity of Flat Foot.

You may also be asked to obtain a Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) scan to assess the injury to the tendon.

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## NON-SURGICAL TREATMENT

In many cases Flat Foot can be managed by non-surgical treatment. Physiotherapists or Podiatrists can discuss an exercise program to help retrain the muscles and Podiatrists can also provide you with an orthotic to provide arch support, which reduces demand on the tendon. Your Doctor can prescribe painkillers.

In many cases, Flat Foot can be managed by nonsurgical treatment.

When to consider having a discussion with your Surgeon for Flat Foot:

- When nonsurgical treatment such as exercises and insoles have been tried and you continue to have pain that is affecting your quality of life.
- Surgery is also considered if Flat Foot is stopping you from doing your usual, favourite and/or essential daily activities.
- Significant change in shape of foot that is affecting what shoes are worn.

## SURGICAL TREATMENT

The aim of surgery is restoring the arch of the foot, which takes pain away and improves walking. There are two main options for surgical treatment of painful Flat Foot:

1. Flat Foot reconstruction
2. Hindfoot fusion

Hindfoot fusion is preferable if the joints under the ankle have become arthritic (painful and stiff). Please refer to the ankle arthritis document for details of this procedure.

Flat Foot reconstruction is complex and involves multiple operations around the foot. It usually involves repairing or strengthening the TP tendon by using another tendon called the Flexor Digitorum Longus (FDL), which normally has a role in bending the small joints in the lesser toes. This tendon is not missed for its original purpose.

In addition, the spring ligament is tightened during this operation and bony procedures (osteotomy with internal fixation), are used to reposition the heel bone to further support the arch of the foot. This is done by minimally invasive means.

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## POST-OPERATIVE CARE FOR FLAT FOOT RECONSTRUCTION

- **You must elevate the foot for 23 hours a day above the level of your heart for the first two weeks in a plaster slab after surgery.**
- You will have to non-weight-bear for a total of 6 weeks from the time of surgery.
- You will have a consultation with Mr Goldbloom 2 weeks after your surgery. Your slab will be changed to a boot and you are to remain non-weight-bearing with this for a further 4 weeks.
- Physiotherapy will be required post-operatively. It will be tailored to you and how well you are recovering.
- Refer to the foot and ankle surgery information sheet for further post-operative instructions.

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