

the **early years** toolkit

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Common problems and acceptable variations in typical development

Common variations in walking patterns

There is a wide range of normal variation in children's walking patterns.

The following areas are often a cause for concern to parents and carers but are all normal variations that do not require physiotherapy assessment.



- **Flat feet:** All children are born with flat feet; the medial arch of the foot develops gradually over the first 10 years of life. 20% of 6 year olds still have flat feet with no evidence of a medial arch. There is no evidence that insoles will help an arch to develop in the foot, however they may be useful if a child is experiencing foot and ankle pain associated with walking.
- **Intoeing:** This is where the knee and foot turn inwards in standing. This is common in children, girls more than boys. Often children who intoe sit in a **W** kneeling position to play. Up to the age of 7 or 8 you can expect gradual improvement and many will resolve completely without requiring treatment. Physiotherapy assessment is not required unless the child is having difficulty with walking or running. The child should be encouraged to sit cross legged and not in a **W** and to participate in sports. You should not ask the child to try and correct their walking pattern as this can be counterproductive.
- **Bow legs:** This is when there is a larger gap between the knees than the ankles in standing. This usually corrects naturally by the age of three with no long-term consequences. Assessment by a Physiotherapist is required if one leg only appears bowed and one leg is straight.
- **Knock knees:** This is when there is a larger gap between the ankles than the knees in standing. It is common in children aged 3 – 8 years. This usually improves over time without treatment. Assessment is required by a Physiotherapist if one leg appears more bent than the other or if the gap is very large.
- **Curly toes:** This is common in young children and often runs in families. No treatment is required unless there is pain or skin or nail changes.
- **Toe walking:** This is where a child walks on their tip toes. There are several different reasons why this might occur and it often runs in families. If this interferes with daily activities then advice from the CYPIT Advice line would be recommended.

Common Variations in Speech and Language Development

Speech

Children develop speech sounds over time, with words gradually sounding more like the adult version.

A simple guide of how those sounds develop is provided for your information

[Speech Sound Norms Advice Sheet >>](#)

Language

There is a wide normal variation in the rate at which children learn to talk. Many children will catch up over time given the language stimulation that they need to progress. Lots of people can help your child's language development to include:

- You and your family and friends
- Your child's pre-school or nursery environment
- Your child's friends and playmates

[A simple guide to how language skills develop >>](#)

Steps to Talking

A more detailed breakdown of the developmental stages in speech and language development can be found in:

[Appendix 3 -ECAT Early Communication and Language Monitoring Progress >>](#)

or at www.wordsforlife.org.uk >>

If your child does not seem to be at the level you would expect, try and build their skills at the level below their age range, or look at the advice sheets on speech and language within the toolkit for ideas to help move them on:

[Baby Talk >>](#)

[Babble 1 >>](#)

[Babble 2 >>](#)

[Basic Communication Strategies >>](#)

[Toddler Talk >>](#)

[Pre School Talk >>](#)

[Helping children with unclear speech >>](#)

Bilingualism: One Language or Two?

Many children will grow up hearing different languages that they will learn to use within their families or within their learning environment.