



A Parent's Guide to Pediatric Toe Walking

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A child's balance strategies are much less likely to respond to therapy after the age of three. The internet (and many clinicians) mostly have knowledge that applies to toe walkers of a couple of generations ago, and is not applicable to the toe walkers of today.

What are some red flags?

- The first part of the foot to come in contact with the ground is the front of the foot and your child has been walking independently for longer than 6 months.
- Your child dislikes having their feet touched or getting their hair brushed; clothing tags bother them
- They are clumsy, fall often, bump into things, or "fall over their own feet."
- They get car sick.
- They love spinning and similar activities more than other children.
- They are either experiencing, or have a history of, delayed milestones.
- Ankle flexibility is getting tighter, and they have difficulty standing on flat feet even if they try.
- Your child was premature or low birth weight.
- Your child has difficulty with speech or learning.

Is my child really toe walking?

Your child may not actually be “toe walking.” Instead, it may be a part of normal development. However, this is very short-lived, and looks very different from problematic toe walking. Toe walking may not be cause for concern if:

- Your child takes a few steps on their toes and then returns to flat foot.
- The “toe walking” is reducing in frequency.
- Your child has only been walking independently for several weeks.

What can I do if I have concerns?

Consult a pediatric physical therapist who is experienced and successful in treating toe walking. Alternatively, you can provide your pediatrician with research about the specific stages of normal walking development. A complete improvement of toe walking is possible - without Botox, surgery, or restrictive braces. “No poison, no knives!”

About the Author

Liesa M. Persaud, PT, DPT, PCS, CKTP is a licensed physical therapist with 23 years experience in the field of adult and pediatric therapy. View Liesa's webinars on MedBridge and contact her for further information on pediatric toe walking at her website: www.knowtochange.com.

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