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PATIENT EDUCATION HANDOUTS

Intoeing (Pigeon Toe)

What is intoeing?

Intoeing is a condition where the toes point inward. There are several different causes of intoeing. It is very common in young children and babies. It is also called being pigeon toed.

How does intoeing occur?

In children less than 2 years old the most common cause is that the shin bone is turned in. This may be caused by how the baby was carried inside the mother.

For children over 2 years old, the most common cause is that the thigh bone (femur) is turned in. The thigh bone is turned in at the hip. This causes the knees, feet, and toes to all point in. These children tend to sit with their legs crossed.

One last cause of intoeing is when the front part of the foot turns in. This is usually a problem a child is born with.

How is it diagnosed?

Usually parents bring their child into their healthcare provider's office because they have noticed their child's toes pointing in. Your child's provider will be able to tell by looking at the feet and legs.

How is it treated?

Most children do not need treatment. Usually intoeing gets better without treatment. For children under 2 years old, it usually gets better once the baby starts to stand and walk. For children over 2, the main treatment is simply having the child NOT cross his or her legs. The problem usually gets better when they start school and have to sit in chairs and can no longer cross their legs.

If there is a problem with the foot, sometimes special shoes are worn to straighten the foot. In severe cases, children wear casts on their feet and lower legs. Casts are usually put on children before 8 months of age. In rare cases surgery is needed.

How can I prevent intoeing?

Because intoeing is something children are born with, you cannot prevent the problem.

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This content is reviewed periodically and is subject to change as new health information becomes available. The information is intended to inform and educate and is not a replacement for medical evaluation, advice, diagnosis or treatment by a healthcare professional.

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