

Toe Walking

What is Toe Walking?

- **Lack of heel contact while walking resulting in walking on the balls of your feet**
- **Common variation when children first learn to walk**
 - Especially in late walkers
 - Should resolve within 3-6 months as their walking continues to develop
 - Cause for intervention when it persists beyond 2 years of age
- **Idiopathic Toe Walking**
 - When toe walking is present without associated pathology
 - This is a diagnosis of exclusion meaning that all other diagnoses associated with toe walking have been ruled out
- **When additional signs and symptoms are present, toe walking may be linked to neuromuscular diagnoses including:**
 - Cerebral Palsy
 - Muscular Dystrophy
 - Autism

What to be Looking For

You may contact a pediatric physical therapist at any point for information about abnormalities in your child's walking pattern. Here are some signs to start looking for that would be appropriate to seek advice from a therapist or pediatrician about.

- **Stiffness in Achilles tendon (back of their ankle)**
 - How far can you bend their foot up, toes towards nose?
 - Is it different if their knee is straight or bent?
 - If your child's foot can't get past a neutral position of 90 degrees between shin and foot, even with knee bent, a tight Achille's may be contributing to toe walking.
- **Symmetrical movement**
 - Does one side seem to be more involved than the other?
 - Idiopathic toe walking is predominantly symmetrical
- **Tight leg muscles**
 - Legs that squeeze together or cross over when stepping
 - Legs that don't straighten out very easily
- **Sensory sensitivities**
 - Can they walk on their heels if you ask them to?
 - Does your child avoid certain textures, sounds, or bright lights?
 - Does your child seek activities involving a lot of spinning, bouncing, or rocking?
- **Onset**
 - Did your child walk on their heels hitting the floor regularly before beginning to toe walk?