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High arch

High arch is a foot arch that is raised more than normal. The arch runs from the toes to the heel on the bottom of the foot. It is also called pes cavus.

High arch is the opposite of flat feet.

Causes

High foot arches are much less common than flat feet. They can be caused by a bone (orthopedic) or nerve (neurological) condition.

Unlike flat feet, highly arched feet tend to be painful. This is so because more stress is placed on the section of the foot between the ankle and toes (metatarsals). This condition can make it difficult to fit into shoes. People who have high arches most often need foot support. A high arch may cause disability.

Symptoms

Symptoms include:

- Shortened foot length
- Difficulty fitting shoes
- Foot pain with walking, standing, and running (not everyone has this symptom)

Exams and Tests

When the person stands on the foot, the instep looks hollow. Most of the weight is on the back and balls of the foot (metatarsals head).

Your health care provider will check to see if the high arch is flexible, meaning it can be moved around.

Tests that may be done include:

- X-ray of the feet
- X-ray of the spine
- Electromyography
- MRI of the spine

- Nerve conduction studies
- Genetic testing to look for genes that you can pass on to your child

Treatment

High arches, particularly ones that are flexible or well cared for, may not need any treatment.

Orthotics that can be placed in shoes may help the symptoms of high arches. Corrective shoes may help relieve pain and improve walking. This includes changes to the shoes, such as an arch insert and a supportive insole.

Surgery to flatten the foot is sometimes needed in severe cases. Any nerve problems that exist must be treated and monitored by specialists.

Outlook (Prognosis)

The outlook depends on the condition causing high arches. In mild cases, wearing proper shoes and arch supports may provide relief.

Possible Complications

Complications may include:

- Chronic pain
- Difficulty walking

When to Contact a Medical Professional

Contact your provider if you think you have foot pain related to high arches.

Prevention

People with highly arched feet should be checked for nerve and bone conditions. Finding these other conditions may help prevent or reduce arch problems, and other orthopedic conditions.

Alternative Names

Pes cavus; High foot arch

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