

TOE WALKING

Some children adopt a toe walking pattern from the time they first learn to walk. Idiopathic toe walking is a term used to describe children who continue to walk on their toes beyond what is considered developmentally appropriate.

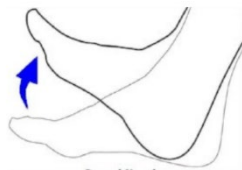
Toe walking can be caused by muscle weakness or tightness. It can also be present in a child with increased or decreased sensitivity to sensory information. Persistent toe walking can lead to tight muscles, decreased ankle mobility and back or leg pain.

TIPS AND ACTIVITIES TO DISCOURAGE TOE WALKING

- Have your child wear shoes, even inside the house, as this should make walking on their toes more difficult. Look for supportive high top shoes with a firm sole as these make walking on their toes more difficult.
- Encourage your child to play in a squat position (with heels down) frequently throughout the day. This will encourage your child to play with feet flat, and will provide a stretch to the calf muscles, which may have become tight from persistent toe walking.
- Use verbal cueing and modelling to demonstrate walking with a heel-toe pattern as much as possible throughout the day. Use words such as “heels down” as a reminder.

Practice different types of walking games to help strengthen leg and ankle muscles:

- Up inclined surfaces like a hill, the slide at the park or ramp in your yard
- Walk on their heels; you can hold their hands for support if needed
- Walk backwards
- Marching like in a band or a parade; have your child practice lifting their feet up, bending at the hip and knee, and stomping down on flat feet
- Encourage your child to toe tap to their favourite music while sitting on a chair or bench. Ask them to keep their heels on the floor and only lift their toes up.



In persistent cases where exercises are not helpful, orthotics, bracing and/or more intensive treatment options may be recommended. Consult with your child's Health Care Provider as needed.

If your child has sensory processing challenges, talk to your Health Care Provider about options for other services as needed.