

High foot arches can be a problem

PES cavus is the medical term for a foot having an abnormally high arch.

These type of feet retain their high-arched appearance even when weight bearing.

This type of foot deformity is much less common than a flat foot (pes planus) but, like flat feet, high arches can still lead to major problems.

In some cases, the cause of high arch feet is just a normal variant (some people just have higher arches). In some cases, there may be an underlying neurological problem that is causing it but the main cause is hereditary.

Pes cavus usually affects both feet and is usually apparent at an early age.

The high arched foot is poor at absorbing the shock of heel strike, creating abnormal stresses on the soft tissues of the heel and mid-tarsal joints. The shock can be transmitted to the ankle, knees, hips and lower back and cause pain.

Other symptoms of a high arch foot will vary, depending on how severe the condition is and the activity levels of the person.

Initially, most people will have no problems at all, while for others, symptoms may vary from a mild problem with shoe fitting to significant disability. Sadly, symptoms usually get more and more pronounced with age. However, and as is usual in such cas-

es, the earlier problems are dealt with, the less likely they are to get severe.

Some of the symptoms can include:

- *Corns and calluses, especially under the bases of the first and fifth toes.*
- *Toes can become 'clawed'.*
- *Shoes may not fit well because of the high arch and the clawed toes.*
- *There may be pain in the arch area.*
- *The foot will feel stiff and less mobile.*
- *Ankle sprains are more common in those with a high arched foot.*
- *Pain in the ball of the foot.*
- *Heel pain.*
- *Tight Achilles tendons.*
- *Knees, hips and lower back may be sore and painful.*

There are initially things that sufferers can do such as wearing wide fitting shoes with good cushioning and an arch support, to controlling body weight to decrease load.

Once symptoms start to develop, you can make regular visits to a chiropodist/podiatrist to treat the corns and calluses and have sessions with a chartered physiotherapist to keep the back and hips loose.

But, as with many related

problems, symptoms will get worse unless the root cause is tackled.

Prescriptive foot orthotics provide support for these stressed joints and soft tissues and can be specifically constructed to increase shock absorption.

With the re-distribution of weight, this also relieves stress on the metatarsals. Orthotic therapy is effective for patients, but be aware that, while over-the-counter arch supports or insoles may appear to be helpful initially, they frequently end up causing more problems than they solve.

Also, the accuracy that is required by old-fashioned measuring and manufacturing techniques of many so-called prescription orthotics is simply not there.

For truly prescriptive 21st century orthotics, it takes a computer to measure accurately how you walk.

These measurements are then passed direct to the

manufacturer via the internet who will make orthotics just for you.

For more details or to discuss prescription orthotics, patients may self refer direct to Estelle Mitchell, Biomechanical and Musculoskeletal Specialist and your English Chartered Physiotherapist, by calling 952 883 151 or by visiting her websites at: www.thebodyworksclinic.com www.marbellaphysiotherapy.com or www.physiofoot.com



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