

# Toe Walking

## Information Leaflet

### Children's Physiotherapy Service (Cambridgeshire)



## What is Toe Walking?

Toe walking is where the heel makes little or no contact with the floor when standing or walking. This can be intermittent or constant.

This is normal when a child first starts to walk, however, they should quickly grow out of this. If this persists then it is called toe walking.

Toe walking is relatively common.



## What are the symptoms associated with toe walking?

### Occasionally the child may also:

- suffer with pain or discomfort
- be more wobbly on their feet
- have a tendency to walk fast or run
- fall over more frequently.

## What are the causes of toe walking?

The exact cause of toe walking is unknown, but the following can cause toe walking in some children.

**Habit** - A child may just get used to toe walking, but over time this can increase muscle tightness/shortness.

**Weak trunk muscles**– These are muscles of the body excluding the head and limbs.

**Short calf muscles** (lower leg muscles)- This causes the child to lift their heels when walking to make it more comfortable.

**Neurological** (brain) problems.

## How is toe walking treated?

The treatment offered to your child will depend on their specific symptoms and problems. The physiotherapist will discuss the most appropriate treatment for your child.

### Exercises

Try to do these exercises twice a day or as directed by your physiotherapist.

#### Upper Calf Stretch

Stand with the leg that you want to stretch behind you. Both feet must face forwards.

Keep your heels on the floor, slowly bend your front knee, until a stretch is felt in the back calf muscle. Keep your back knee straight. Hold \_\_\_ seconds.

Repeat \_\_\_ times.  
Repeat on other leg

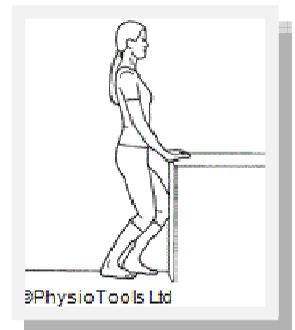


#### Lower Calf Stretch

As above but both your knees are bent.

Hold \_\_\_\_\_ seconds.

Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.  
Repeat on other leg



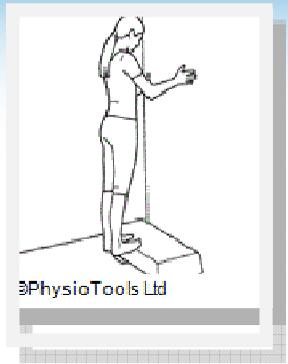
## Standing on a step.

Holding on the bannister/wall. Have both feet on a step with your heels off the edge. Let your body weight bring your heels down feeling a stretch in the back of your calves.

This is especially beneficial when muscles are warm, for example after a bath.

Hold \_\_\_ seconds.

Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times

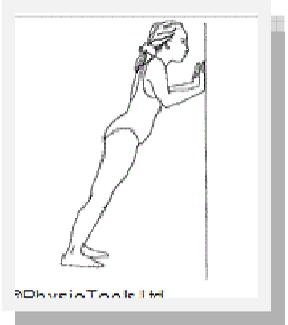


## Leading forward against the wall as shown.

Keep your heels on the floor and legs straight. Lean forwards on to a wall. You should feel a stretch in the back of your calves.

Hold for \_\_\_\_\_ seconds.

Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.



## Walking in a crouched position.

Walk with your knees and feet pointing forwards.



## Walking on your heels

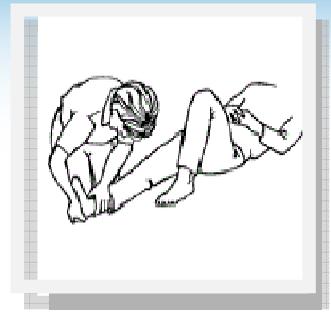
Walk on your heels for \_\_\_\_\_ seconds.



## Bending the ankle

Hold the heel. Support the sole of the foot on your forearm. Place your other hand over the ankle. Pull the heel towards the leg as you push your forearm against the sole of the foot.

Hold for \_\_\_\_\_ seconds.  
Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times



## Standing on One Leg

Stand on one leg for \_\_\_\_ seconds.  
Can you cross your arms while standing on one leg?  
Can you pick up objects with your free foot whilst keeping balanced? E.g. socks, beanbags  
Can you do it with your eyes closed?

Repeat with your other leg.

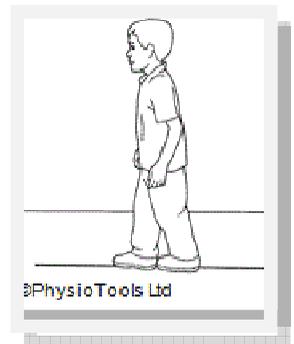


## Line Walking

Tape a line approximately 5m long by 2.5cm wide (using masking tape). Walk along the line.

Progression:

1. Balance a bean bag on your head whilst walking along the line.
2. Practice heel-toe walking (like the picture)



## Bridge

Lie on your back with your arms at your side and your knees bent. Feet should be flat on the floor. Lift your bottom off the floor and hold this position for 10 seconds. Relax.



Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.

Progression: As above, but once your bottom is off the floor, straighten one knee. Hold 10 seconds. Relax. Repeat \_\_\_\_ times. Repeat on other leg.

## 3 point kneeling

Start on hands and knees.

Raise an arm to the same height as your shoulder.

Hold for 10 seconds. Repeat with other arm.

Repeat \_\_\_\_ times.



Progressions:

-Same start position but lift leg so leg is same height as hip.

-Lift opposite arm with opposite leg.

Hold 10 seconds. Repeat \_\_\_\_ times.

## Footwear

Supportive, well fastened footwear can help your child maintain a good foot position and improve their walking pattern.

## Serial Casting

This is where your child's feet are put into plaster casts which are changed every week to slowly stretch out the muscles and increase the movement at the joints.

## What are the benefits of the treatment?

The above treatment can improve your child's walking and improve their muscle length although it may not cure the problem completely.



## For further information about this service contact:

Children's Therapy Services  
The Peacock Centre  
Brookfields Campus  
351 Mill Road  
Cambridge  
CB1 3DF  
Tel: 01223 218065

Children's Therapy  
Oak Tree Centre  
1 Oak Tree Drive  
Huntingdon  
Cambs PE29 7HN

**Tel: 01480 418581**

Children's Therapy  
Highfield School  
Downham Road  
Ely  
Cambs CB6 1BD

**Tel: 01353 772882**

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If you have any compliments about this service or suggestions for improvements, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service on 0300 131 1000 (charges may apply depending on your network) or email: [ccs-tr.pals@nhs.net](mailto:ccs-tr.pals@nhs.net).

For free, confidential health advice and information 24 hours a day, 365 days a year please contact NHS 111.