

# Children's Health

## A Step In The Right Direction

(NAPSA)—Before your children run off to explore the world, make sure you have done all you can to keep their feet in good health.

“Many adult foot problems have their origin in childhood and can easily be prevented,” said Dr. Christian Robertozzi, president of the American Podiatric Medical Association (APMA). “That’s why it’s so important to check your child’s feet at an early age—and do what you can to prevent future problems.”

Here are a few helpful tips from APMA experts:

1. Carefully observe your child’s walking patterns. Do your child’s feet seem to toe in or out? Does he or she have knock-knees or other gait abnormalities? These problems can be corrected if they are detected early and seen by a podiatrist.

2. Children’s feet change size rapidly, so always have your child’s feet measured each time you purchase new shoes.

3. When shopping for shoes, choose support over style. Look for stiff material on either side of the heel, adequate cushioning and a built-in arch. The shoe should bend at the ball of the foot, not in the middle of the shoe. Make sure to shop later in the day when your child’s feet are at their largest, as feet swell during the day.

4. Limit the time children wear platform shoes or heeled shoes and alternate with good-quality sneakers or flat shoes. High-tops generally help prevent ankle sprains.

5. Don’t buy shoes that need a



**Check your child’s feet and walking patterns. The bones of growing feet are so flexible, a child may not complain of pain even though there’s something wrong.**

“break-in” period. Good shoes should feel comfortable right away. For athletic activities, choose a shoe that is designed for the sport your child will be playing.

A child’s first checkup with a podiatrist should happen when the child starts to walk or when any foot abnormalities are found.

Children should be seen by a podiatrist if:

- their shoes wear unevenly
- their feet develop lumps or bumps
- their legs or feet hurt
- they fall or trip frequently
- they have skin or toenail problems.

Because children may not always complain about foot discomfort, parents need to be observant and take them to a podiatrist at the first sign of a foot problem. For more information, visit [www.apma.org](http://www.apma.org).