

ADULT ACQUIRED FLATFOOT



Overview

This condition is a progressive collapse of the tendons and ligaments that hold up the foot's arch. This condition most commonly affects women. It typically occurs in only one foot, but in some cases, both feet are afflicted.

Causes

Adult flatfoot typically occurs very gradually. It often develops in an obese person who already has somewhat flat feet. As the person ages, the tendons and ligaments that support the foot begin to lose their strength and elasticity. The posterior tibial tendon, which travels along the inner side of the ankle and into the arch, may begin to gradually stretch and tear. The ligaments of the arch fail, allowing the bones of the foot to slip out of position and the foot to roll inward. Eventually, the arch collapses completely.

Symptoms

In many cases, adult flatfoot causes no pain or problems. In others, pain may be severe. Many people experience aching pain in the heel and arch and swelling along the inner side of the foot. Prolonged standing can aggravate the symptoms and cause the feet to tire easily. As the condition progresses, pain may shift to the outer side of the foot, and arthritis may develop in the foot and ankle.

Treatment

Flatfoot can be treated with a variety of methods, including modified shoes, orthotic devices, a brace or cast, anti-inflammatory medications or limited steroid injections, rest, ice, and physical therapy. In severe cases, surgery may be necessary.