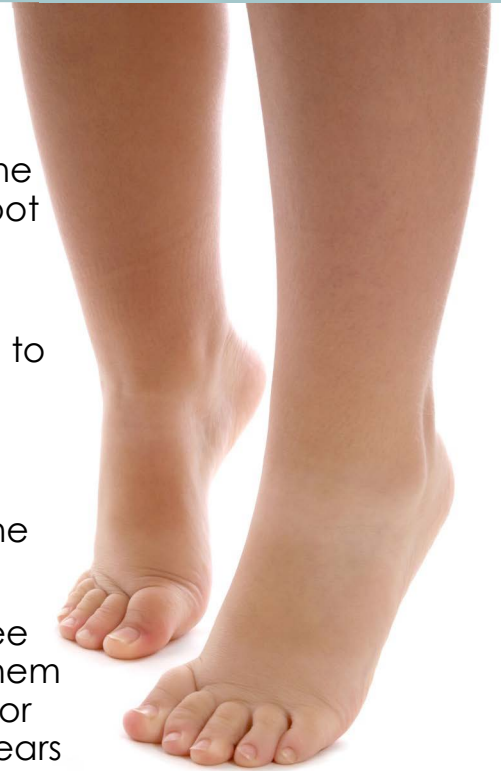


# TOE WALKING

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## WHAT IS IT?

- Idiopathic toe walking is when a child continues to walk up on their toes or the balls of both feet past the age of three years. The heels or other parts of the foot do not come in contact with the floor. Idiopathic means that the cause is unknown.
- Toe walking is common in children that are learning to walk, however most outgrow this and progress to walking with a heel to toe pattern.
- Habitual toe walking can lead to tight calf muscles and decreased range of motion or movement at the ankle joints.
- If your child continues to walk on their toes past three years of age, talk to your doctor about it. Talk to them sooner if you also suspect stiffness of their legs or poor muscle coordination. Toe walking in children of 3 years or older may be associated with a medical condition.



## WAYS TO ADDRESS TOE WALKING

- ✓ **EXERCISES & STRETCHES**- If toe walking persists, a physical therapist can help by recommending stretches that improve the flexibility of the ankle. Exercises can also be recommended that strengthen the front of the leg.
- ✓ **SENSORY STRATEGIES**- An Occupational Therapist can recommend techniques that provide sensory input that may help a child tolerate placing their foot flat on the ground. Other strategies can help with developing a child's body awareness and minimize the influence of early reflexes that may contribute to toe walking.
- ✓ **SHOES**- Choosing a more rigid, high-cut shoe or certain inserts can help to discourage toe walking.
- ✓ **RAISE AWARENESS OF TOE WALKING**- Many children will go through a period of toe walking in development. Some will get "stuck" in this pattern and are often unaware that they are doing it.
  - Take a picture or video your child walking to give them a visual reference.
  - Bring awareness by verbally reminding them to return to a flat foot position. This can include saying "heels down" , "flat feet", or "walk heel-toe".
- ✓ **PHYSICIAN PRESCRIBED INTERVENTIONS**- In more persistent cases or when a child is developing muscle contractures, a physician may prescribe taping, bracing, or even a series of casts.

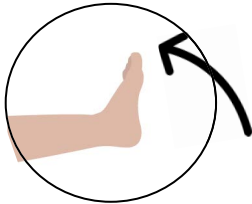
# TOE WALKING INTERVENTIONS

Here are some strategies and techniques that may help decrease toe walking. Use these under the direction of a licensed therapist.

## STRETCHES

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### 1. PASSIVE STRETCH CALF STRETCH

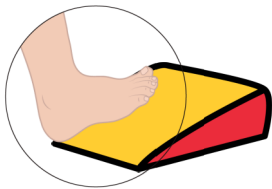


### 2. RUNNER'S STRETCH/ CALF STRETCH

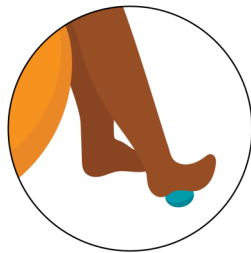


\* DISCOURAGE POSITIONS THAT ALSO SHORTEN CALF MUSCLES SUCH AS KNEE SITTING & W-SITTING

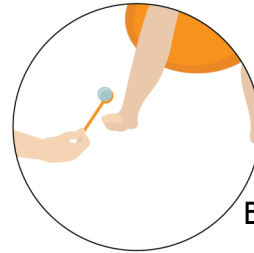
### 3. STANDING ON INCLINE



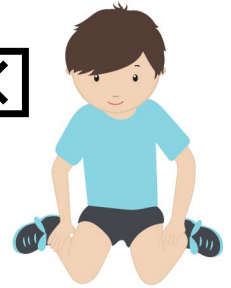
### 4. FOOT/ANKLE STRETCH



USING A BALL



USING BUBBLES



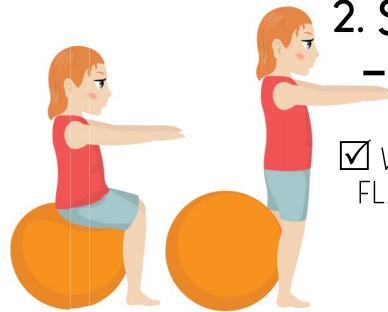
## STRENGTHENING EXERCISES

### 1. SCOOTER BOARD



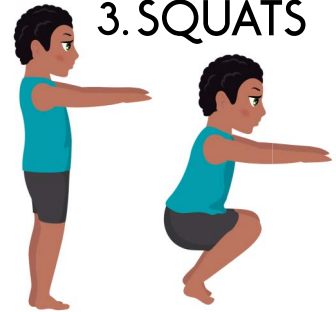
✓ WHILE SEATED MOVE FORWARD

### 2. SIT-TO- STAND



✓ WITH A FLAT FOOT

### 3. SQUATS



### 4. WALKING UPHILL

✓ TRY UNEVEN SURFACES SUCH AS SAND OR PLAYGROUND

### 5. WALKING ON HEELS ONLY



✓ KEEP TOES OFF THE GROUND!

### 6. MARCHING WITH A FLAT FOOT



### 7. PLANK

### 8. YOGA/ ANIMAL WALKS



## SENSORY STRATEGIES



- Desensitize- rub lotion on tops and bottoms of feet
- Desensitize- by rubbing with a sensory brush
- Desensitize- by submerging feet into a small tub of tactile material such as dry beans

