



TRUE OR FALSE?

Parents should expect their kids to experience growing pains, especially in their feet, ankles, and legs.

FALSE! A healthy child should never experience foot or ankle pain! We talked to experts in pediatric foot and ankle care to find out what parents and caregivers can do to safeguard their little ones and keep them healthy, happy, and active. They also offered advice about warning signs that should send you straight to a podiatrist's office.

★ Footwear plays an important role in kids' foot health. Be sure to keep an eye on the **SIZE OF THEIR SHOES**, and have your children professionally fitted when shoe shopping. Girls' cleats tend to be extremely narrow; consider purchasing a pair marketed for boys for better and more supportive fit (*pro-tip: accessorize with colored laces if the selection of boys' cleats doesn't offer your preferred color!*).

★ **EXAMINE THE SOLES** of your children's shoes. Some kids wear out a pair of shoes before they need a bigger size. The bottoms of their shoes can also tell a story about their gait. Uneven wear on shoes could be a sign that your child's gait is not even, which can eventually lead to pain and injury in other parts of the body.

★ **HAND-ME-DOWNS** are great ... but not when it comes to shoes. Shoes become less supportive with wear, and sharing shoes can spread fungal infections.

★ Wear the right shoes for the right sport! Kids should **WEAR APPROPRIATE FOOTWEAR**

for the sport they are playing. Shoes made for basketball, for example, are designed for the lateral movements in that sport, whereas running shoes provide appropriate shock absorption.

★ **CHECK THE FIT** of cleats, skates, and other athletic footwear when a new season begins. Last fall's soccer cleats may not fit properly this spring.

★ Pay attention to **CONDITIONING**. Be sure your child stretches before significant activity, wears orthotics and shoe inserts as directed by a physician, and follows through with physical therapy or other services needed.

★ Watch your child's feet for any changes in their condition, and **BE ALERT TO SIGNS OF PAIN**. If a child is "too tired" to participate in regular activities or has lost interest in a sport or hobby, they may be in pain. Children often can't articulate pain and discomfort as an adult would. If kids do complain of pain that does not resolve in a day or two or with over-the-counter medication, visit an APMA-member podiatrist.