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The Use of Orthoses in Treating Symptomatic and Asymptomatic Pediatric Flatfoot

A recent article in the *Journal of the American Podiatric Medical Association (JAPMA)* summarized the effect of orthoses for pediatric asymptomatic flatfoot. The authors reviewed studies on the use of orthoses to treat pediatric flatfoot, and made several recommendations for subsequent treatment:

- When it comes to symptomatic pediatric flatfoot, the authors emphasize the use of footwear, stretching, or orthoses.
- The article advocated monitoring and providing simple treatment for patients with a typical asymptomatic flatfoot that displays non-developmental foot morphological structures for the child's age.

In response to the article, Russell Holt, DPM, cites numerous advantages to treating flatfoot with orthoses. He says the devices correct the position of the child's flat or pronated foot to a more neutral position. Starting orthoses at a young age, when the foot is pliable and cartilaginous, may over time improve the developing foot structure, according to Dr. Holt. Furthermore, orthoses may be advantageous in improving a child's function in regard to gait, sports, and other daily activities.

As we have seen in our own private practices over the past 20 years, young children may not exhibit pain or other symptoms, but they may avoid certain activities or choose more sedentary activities as a result of their pronation or flatfoot position. Therefore, it is important for the practitioner to take into account all of these factors when determining whether to recommend orthoses for a pediatric patient.

In a recent article in *Podiatry Today*, Ron Raducanu, DPM and President of the American College of Foot and Ankle Pediatrics, shared his expert opinion that there are no disadvantages to using orthoses if they are indicated for patients with pediatric flatfoot. The advantage lies in the device's ability to address the patient's comfort. In regard to children with asymptomatic flatfoot or asymptomatic normal appearing foot, Dr. Raducanu explained that some deformities have a clear progression to further deformity and arthritic changes within the foot and ankle, so anything that can be done to limit the deformity's effect is advisable.

[Should You Treat Asymptomatic Pediatric Flatfoot?](#), *Podiatry Today*, December 2008.