

Doctor “My Arch has Fallen”

By: John W. Staeheli, MD

We are seeing more and more individuals who come in with pain in the inside of the ankle and a flattened arch. The acquired flat foot usually comes on slowly due to a loss of function of the posterior tibial tendon. Some people normally have a Flat Foot and it is usually on both feet and is without symptoms (usually).

When it is on one foot and painful it can lead to further collapse of the arch and arthritis in the mid foot and hindfoot. Walking ability can become impaired.

Some people respond to fairly simple measures using shoe wear modifications, orthotics and or braces. Occasionally a period of casting and not bearing weight for several weeks. Others require surgery to reconstruct the proper biomechanics. This frequently requires several procedures together to lengthen the Achilles tendon, transfer a tendon to support the arch and cutting a bone (osteotomy) to change the angle or to lengthen it. In some cases it is necessary to fuse 2 or more bones together to prevent the arch and foot from collapsing.

This surgery improves the foot and prevents further collapse. While it can take several months to fully recover it provides a stable arch and can prevent further problems if performed before full collapse of the arch.