

## **News Release**

For immediate release

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# **Children Running Barefoot In Cross-Country Races A 'No-no' says Podiatrist**

Feet absorb one and a half to two times our body weight during normal walking and up to four times our body weight when jogging, yet Kiwi school children still run barefoot in cross-country races, risking painful foot injuries.

In other words, for an eight-year old child weighing 25kg it could mean an additional 100kg is sent directly through their feet with each step while running. Without the protection and support of well-fitted shoes, the negative impact on feet can be significant, says podiatrist and Foot Mechanics director John Miller.

“Term Two signifies a hectic time of year for my team of podiatrists as many parents seek help for their children following painful foot injuries resulting from running barefoot in school running events.

“Children’s feet are easily damaged because the bones are still developing and continue to grow throughout adolescence - and sadly sometimes childhood injuries follow them throughout life. The simple answer to reduce foot injuries is to get children to wear appropriate shoes for the duration of the event,” Miller says.

“I urge parents and teachers to commit to helping children avoid really painful injuries such as Severs’ Disease simply by encouraging them to wear appropriate well-fitted shoes.”

Severs' Disease is an overuse condition involving the attachment of the Achilles tendon to the heel bone - pain is caused by constant pulling of the tendon on the heel bone resulting in muscles and tendons becoming tight, swollen and sometimes results in limping.

Miller says getting children to wear shoes not only offers foot protection but also support for the feet. When fitting footwear parents should follow these guidelines:

- Always have both feet measured for length and width.
- The shoe should fit the natural shape of the foot especially around the toes.
- The toe of the shoe should allow toes to move freely and not be squashed from the top or the sides. Make sure there is about 10mm growing room for children between the end of the longest toe and the end of the shoe.
- Shoes should fit comfortably around the heel and not be too loose or too tight.

“Keeping feet clean and dry also helps protect feet from tinea and warts, two common skin infections seen in children.

“If parents see something or are unsure they should seek correct professional advice from a podiatrist and parents need to check their children's shoe size regularly to allow for growth.”

Children will walk around 128,000kms during their lifetime. That's more than three times around the earth. While regular exercise, including walking, is an essential element of healthy living for children an understanding that their feet are unique and knowing how to protect them will set children on the right path for life.

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### **About Foot Mechanics**

Experienced providers for some of New Zealand's top sport teams including the All Blacks, Silver Ferns and Black Caps, Foot Mechanics has clinics in

Auckland, Bay of Plenty, Waikato and Manawatu regions. For further information visit [www.footmechanics.co.nz](http://www.footmechanics.co.nz).

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