

News Release

For immediate release

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Feet First Week Is Time To Think About Health Of Children's Feet

Over 130,000 children will be walking to school this week in support of Feet First Walk To School Week from March 3 to 7. While it is great exercise and healthy for kids, podiatrist John Miller says now is a good time for parents to take a look at their children's walk and shoes to ensure they enjoy walking for life and develop good lower limb health.

He urges parents to watch for symptoms of uncomfortable shoes. They might be uneven shoe wear, skin rashes, hard skin, lumps or bumps on the feet.

"Your child might complain of recurrent pain in their feet or legs. They might be constantly tripping and falling.

"Children's feet are easily damaged because the cartilage is still developing and continues to grow throughout adolescence. Their feet aren't smaller versions of adult feet; they need special consideration especially when shopping for shoes. The strain or pressure put on feet caused by an incorrectly fitted shoe can cause damage to the cartilage," says Miller.

"Hand-me-down shoes from older siblings or friends can also influence the growth of children's feet."

He says if parents see something or are unsure they should seek correct professional advice from a podiatrist. He also advises parents to check their children's shoe size regularly to allow for growth.

"The Chinese tradition of foot binding is a clear example of how incorrectly fitted footwear has long term negative effects on feet. Little girls had their feet

bound tightly with cloth over many years to maintain the tiny shape of the foot, which was thought of as beautiful. The painful reality as an adult, however, was a set of clumsy deformed feet making walking difficult and running impossible. Of course this is an extreme example of incorrect footwear but demonstrates how vulnerable young feet are.”

Miller says children are so active—they hop, skip, jump, walk, run, kick a ball—and appropriate well-fitted shoes offer protection from injury as well as support for the feet. Keeping feet clean and dry also helps protect feet from tinea and warts, two common skin infections seen in children he says.

Those 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

Foot Mechanics has clinics in Auckland, Bay of Plenty, Waikato and Manawatu regions and are experienced providers for some of New Zealand’s top sport teams including the All Blacks, Silver Ferns and Black Caps.

About Feet First Walk to School Week 2008

The aim of Feet First Walk to School Week during 3-7 March 2008 is to encourage children to walk to school with a caregiver, a friend, or on a walking school bus. Schools have chances to win prizes and children receive stickers and progress cards. The New Zealand Government, Land Transport NZ, RoadWorks, Sanitarium, AMI and Sustainability support the week. See www.feetfirst.govt.nz