

Intoeing in children (pigeon toes)

What is intoeing?

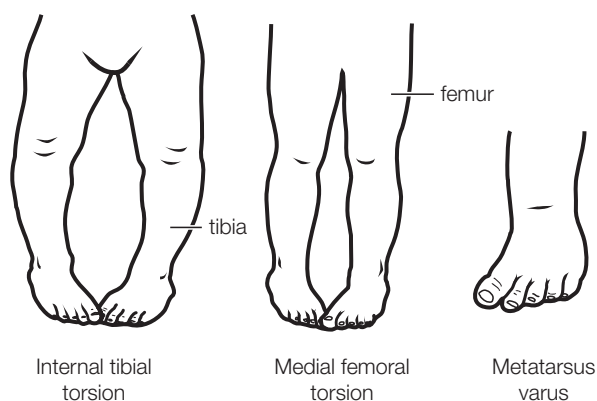
It is the turning in of children's feet when they walk.

It may be referred to as pigeon-toed. The cause is usually a twist in one of the leg bones, especially the tibia (shin bone). As a rule the twist in the tibia and femur is gone by school age.

Intoeing is common in children but invariably improves with age. Corrective shoes or inserts do not hasten improvement. It is best left to correct itself as the child grows.

There are 3 different types of causes:

1. *hooked foot*: in infants
2. *tibial torsion*: in toddlers
3. *inset hips*: in kindergarten or preschool children.



Hooked foot (metatarsus varus)

Hooked foot is caused by the position of the baby before birth. The foot is turned inwards at the ankle. The sole of the foot is bean shaped. It usually gets better without treatment during the first month. If it is still present after 3 months or so, it should be seen by a specialist who may apply a temporary plaster cast.

Tibial torsion

Tibial torsion is where the main bone (the tibia) of the leg rotates inwards from below the knee. It results when the normal development of rotation is prevented by the child's sleeping posture.

Most legs with tibial torsion get better without treatment. If the legs are not symmetrical (the same on both sides) or the torsion persists for longer than 12 months, the child should be seen by a specialist.

Inset hips (femoral torsion)

With inset hips the femur, which sits in the socket of the hip joint, tends to rotate inwards. The cause is unknown. It is usually most severe when the child is about 5 to 6 years old and is normal up to 12 years of age. The children tend to sit in a 'w' position but this is not the cause of inset hips. Fortunately, most children outgrow this condition before the age of 12. If it persists for 8 years after being first noticed, referral to a specialist is necessary.



The 'w' position of femoral torsion (inset hips)