

High Arches

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High arches, also known as pes cavus, are a condition where the arch of the foot is raised more than normal. This condition can affect one or both feet and varies in severity. Understanding high arches is crucial for proper diagnosis and management to prevent discomfort or complications.

What Are High Arches?

The arch of the foot plays an essential role in distributing weight and absorbing impact during walking, running, or standing. High arches occur when the arch is overly elevated, which can result in uneven weight distribution. Unlike flat feet, which have little to no arch, high arches create an exaggerated curve in the midfoot region.

Causes of High Arches

High arches can be caused by various factors, including:

1. **Genetics:** Many individuals inherit high arches from their family. If parents or siblings have high arches, there's a greater likelihood of developing the condition.
2. **Neurological Disorders:** Conditions such as Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease, spina bifida, or cerebral palsy can lead to muscle imbalances, resulting in high arches.
3. **Trauma:** Injuries to the foot, especially to the midfoot or ankle, can cause structural changes that elevate the arch.
4. **Muscle or Nerve Damage:** Weakness or damage in the muscles and nerves supporting the foot may contribute to this condition.



Symptoms of High Arches

The symptoms of high arches can vary based on severity but commonly include:

1. **Foot Pain:** High arches can lead to increased pressure on the heel and ball of the foot, causing discomfort.
2. **Calluses:** Uneven weight distribution may cause thickened skin or calluses, especially under the ball of the foot or heel.
3. **Instability:** Individuals with high arches might experience ankle instability or frequent sprains due to less surface contact with the ground.
4. **Toe Deformities:** Conditions like hammertoes or claw toes can occur due to muscle imbalances.
5. **Shoe Fit Issues:** People with high arches may find it challenging to find comfortable shoes that provide adequate support.



Diagnosing High Arches

A healthcare provider, such as a podiatrist or orthopedic specialist, can diagnose high arches through:

- **Physical Examination:** Inspecting the foot structure and assessing gait.
- **Imaging Tests:** X-rays, CT scans, or MRIs may be used to evaluate bone and soft tissue alignment.
- **Neurological Evaluation:** If a neurological condition is suspected, additional tests may be performed.



Treatments for High Arches

Treatment for high arches depends on the severity and underlying cause. Options include:

1. **Conservative Treatments:**
 - **Orthotic Inserts:** Custom or over-the-counter insoles provide arch support and cushioning to reduce pressure on the foot.
 - **Supportive Shoes:** Wearing shoes with good arch support and cushioning can help alleviate discomfort.
 - **Physical Therapy:** Stretching and strengthening exercises improve foot mechanics and reduce symptoms.
 - **Pain Management:** Over-the-counter pain relievers or icing the affected area may ease discomfort.
2. **Medical Interventions:**
 - **Bracing:** Ankle braces may be prescribed to improve stability and prevent sprains.
 - **Corticosteroid Injections:** For severe pain, injections may provide temporary relief.
3. **Surgical Options:**
 - Surgery may be considered in severe cases where conservative treatments fail. Procedures can include tendon transfers, bone realignment, or fusions to correct foot structure.



Preventing Complications

To prevent complications associated with high arches:

- **Wear Proper Footwear:** Choose shoes with ample cushioning and arch support.
- **Monitor Symptoms:** Address pain, instability, or deformities promptly with professional help.
- **Maintain Foot Health:** Regular foot care, including managing calluses and keeping feet moisturized, can reduce discomfort.

Conclusion

High arches can significantly impact foot function and overall mobility. Early diagnosis and proper management, whether through conservative treatments or medical intervention, can help alleviate symptoms and prevent complications. If you suspect you have high arches, consult a healthcare professional for personalized care and treatment options.