



Synopsis

OrthoticS for Treatment of symptomatic flat feet In Children (OSTRICH): a randomised controlled trial

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Published August 2025

DOI: 10.3310/PLKJ4541

Plain language summary

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Health Technology Assessment 2025

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NIHR Journals Library www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk

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Why did we do this trial?

Some children and young people with flat feet seek treatment because their feet cause them problems such as pain. However, we are unsure what the best treatment is. We wanted to find out which of two commonly used treatments is most helpful.

What did we do?

One hundred and thirty-four children and young people aged 6–14 years took part in the study. Half were given exercises, advice and insoles to wear in their shoes, and the other half were given exercises and advice. We collected information about any problems they had with their feet or ankles, including pain, for up to 12 months. We interviewed children and young people, their parents, and healthcare professionals who delivered the treatment to find out their experiences of being in the study.

What did we find?

Due to the coronavirus disease pandemic there were significant delays in setting up the study and starting recruitment. We planned to enrol 478 people, but this was not possible in the time frame, and it would have cost too much money to recruit for longer, so we had to stop the study. In the interviews, people told us that they expected to be given insoles and thought these would work better than the exercises. People who had been given insoles said they thought insoles were easy to use and worked better than exercises. Hardly anyone liked the exercises or thought they worked well. However, healthcare professionals said people had very high expectations of what insoles could do and could be disappointed with the results from insoles.

What does this mean?

We do not have enough information to be able to tell which treatment was most helpful. The lessons learnt from running the study will help other researchers plan future research studies with similar people.