

*Your child has their own set of qualities and preferences that needs to be cherished and nourished to ensure confidence and happiness*



It is most important that you can attend the play based assessment on the date offered.

If you cannot attend on the date offered you may have to wait some time before being seen again.

**Enable Ireland Meath Service**  
**Aerbridge House**  
**Dunshaughlin Business Park**  
**Dunshaughlin**  
**Co. Meath A85 XP48**

N3 from **Navan Direction**: drive through Dunshaughlin  
Approx. ½ mile outside town take left turn into Dunshaughlin Business Park (signposted)  
In business park take first right turn (there's a signpost saying 'Section 4' and sign for Enable Ireland) go to end of road (it's a cul-de-sac). The last building on left is Aerbridge House; Enable Ireland is around at the back of this building.

Phone: 01-8240696  
Email: [admin.dunshaughlin@enableireland.ie](mailto:admin.dunshaughlin@enableireland.ie)



**Children's  
Disability  
Network  
Team**



**Toe-Walking**  
**Information Leaflet**  
**devised by our**  
**Physiotherapists**

**Enable Ireland**  
**Meath Service**  
**Dunshaughlin/East**  
**Meath CDNT 4**

# Toe Walking An Information Leaflet

## Who is likely to Toe-Walk?

An Autistic Child who is sensory-seeking.

### Why?

- They like the feeling/sensation of pressure on the ball of their feet from the contact with the ground.
- The stiffening up of their muscles helps them feel calm and regulated.

### When will you see Toe-Walking?

- Intermittently: when a child is excited or dysregulated
- Consistently: as the child feels more grounded to the floor when they are on their toes

## How you will know if your child is sensory-seeking?

- They may fall/bump into objects
- They may seek deep pressure, hugs, or squeeze into tight spaces

## Key Message

Toe-walking is ok, it is a sensory preference we do not want to change that, however, sometimes it can impact on function....

## When should you seek help?

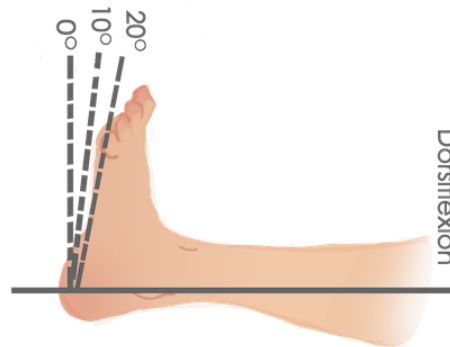
### If your child:

- Cannot get their heels to the ground at all and cannot stand with a flat foot when they want to **because tightness may present in the calf muscles**
- Persistently complains about pain in their legs either verbally or visually (e.g. rubbing their legs) or by seeking massage.
- Sudden onset of toe-walking when the child has already achieved independent walking with a normal walking pattern (>18 months)
- Toe-walking is only 1-sided

## What we can do to help?

Physiotherapists assess for tightness, and if needed, make recommendations for footwear and orthotics.

Physiotherapists and Occupational Therapists work together with the child and family to explore the child's sensory regulation preferences and discuss various strategies to support these preferences.



Normal range of motion for the ankle

## What you can do to help?

If your child likes massages and deep pressure, this can be done to help them to relax

Stretching to resolve tightness is not effective.

Be open to your child's sensory preferences

## Summary

- If your child is sensory-seeking and toe-walks, it is highly likely that their toe-walking is a sensory preference rather than neurological.
- Sensory preferences are normal and shouldn't be prevented but should be monitored.
- We recommend that muscle tightness, pain, and movement ability be monitored

## Key Terms

**A Child who is Sensory-Seeking** potentially has a low body awareness, causing them to seek a lot of pressure/input to feel where their body in space

**Proprioception** Your awareness of your body's position while standing still and while movement is occurring. This sense is possible because of sensors located all around the body, in muscles, joints, ligaments and tendons. Without this, you wouldn't be able to move without thinking about your next step.