

## **Super Soles- What your child's feet can tell you March 2006**

By Ann Gadd

A relation was visiting from overseas and was shocked to see children running around barefoot. She was even more shocked, when we went into an upmarket restaurant on the wine route and found obviously more advantaged children, also strolling around without shoes.

The day my son was told to keep his shoes on at school when he moved into a higher grade, was a dismal day for him. From then on the first thing he did when I collected him from school was to remove his shoes. Even now at the age of 11 he wears shoes only under extreme pressure. Most children do not like wearing shoes, and perhaps they have an intuitive sense of what is good for them.

### **What difference does it make whether children wear shoes or not?**

Reflexologists will tell you that the souls of our feet mirror our soles. In other words all aspects of our physical, emotional, mental and spiritual selves are mapped out on our feet.

Wearing shoes constantly is not good for two reasons:

1. Children's feet grow extremely fast. Consequently they are often subject to shoes that are too tight, either through a mother's need to save on continually buying new shoes, or sometimes a child will forget to mention, or get used to the discomfort. Instead of simply being an irritation for the child, if we can see that the feet are representative our whole selves, then the damage might be more far reaching than simply a callus, blister or bent toes. From warts to bunions, nothing occurs on our feet by chance. As such, they reflect our innermost selves.
2. If children never are allowed to go barefoot, then not only do the nerve endings on the feet become overly sensitive, but the feet are not getting the stimulation they need which in turn stimulates various other parts and functions of the body. Reflexology sandals, with their small bumps on the soul are simply a substitute for stones and sand. In contrast, I have seen young tots tottering on high-heeled shoes, which even I would find hard to balance on and which are detrimental in the long term.

## **Feet Facts:**

- Each foot has 26 bones, more than 100 ligaments and 19 muscles.
- During the course of a single day our feet are subjected to weight loads equivalent to several hundred tons.
- The average person will walk approximately 160,000km in a lifetime – four times round the Earth
- Up to 70% of foot problems may be caused by ill-fitting shoes.
- At birth, the bones in the feet are mostly cartilage and only harden fully in the late teens. Consequently any corrective measures need to be taken before that age.
- Wearing high heeled shoes shortens the muscles in the calves, which can lead to foot problems later. Therefore, a child wearing high-heeled shoes is not a good idea.
- Our nerves are affected when we walk, as each step applies a huge amount of pressure to the various areas on the feet that correspond to these nerves.

## **How our soles mirror our souls.**

When my two and a half year old managed to pull over one of those heavy ribbed oil heaters by pulling the electric cord, it crashed landing onto the tiles, guillotining his toe and cutting cleanly through his foot. Grabbing the toe we raced to the hospital where it was sewn back on. It was only a partial success however and my keen interest in the body and its symbols, lead me to learn more about the relevance of his now partially missing toe, through the work of Chris Stormer (*The Language of the Feet*) and Karin Lombardozzi, both of whom are reflexologists.

Through this I learnt that each aspect of the feet is a relevant indicator of what is happening to us not just on a physical level, but emotionally as well. For instance, a child who was being severely bullied, (to the point that he developed an ulcer,) constantly complained of small cuts on his feet. Quite literally he was being *cut-up* by the situation that his busy parents and teachers had failed to notice.

## **Some specific things to look for on the feet and what they mean:**

**Warts.** *Physical causes:* Warts are caused by a virus, which invades the skin through very small cuts or abrasions or from walking on dirty surfaces or in warm, moist environments. Technically, only those on the sole of the foot are referred to as Plantar warts. They are more prone to develop in children than in adults. In most cases, they are harmless, although they may cause pain, especially if they are on the load-bearing parts of the foot, such as the heel or ball. (In rare cases, more serious malignant lesions can also be thought to be warts, if concerned, it would be wise to consult a podiatric physician to make sure

Plantar warts are raised flat areas and vary in colour from grey to brown. The centre appears as a few pinpoints of black. Plantar warts can be very resistant to treatment. I tried numerous allopathic, homeopathic and herbal remedies with varying degrees of success, when they developed on one of my children and they often reoccur.

If untreated they can grow and multiply because if scratched the resulting blood can carry the virus to other small cuts etc.

*Emotional causes:* Viruses are external organisms that invade us. This indicates that when we have a wart, we feel that we are being invaded in some aspect of our lives and feel powerless to expel the intruder. As they break through our skin, boundary issues are involved. We might want to stand up against the issue or person, but feel incapable of doing so. The pain a wart can cause is also an indication of how painful this situation can be.

Witches commonly have warts and as a child I was told frogs carried the fungus, which is indecently a myth. Both frogs and witches have mythically been associated with ugliness and the darker, shadow aspects of ourselves. It may be these dark, “ugly” thoughts that invade the child, rather than something external. Children often

feel unprotected against the invasion of their space by siblings. They may harbor deep and dark thoughts about those who compete for their parent's attention and know that these thoughts are not acceptable.

Children may find these thoughts or aspects of themselves repulsive or unacceptable. Accepting someone "*warts and all*," is to accept them, despite their deficiencies.

## **Calluses**

*Physical causes:* Calluses are thickenings (hyperkeratoses) of the surface layer of skin caused by pressure and friction on the skin of your foot. They can usually be easily seen and may have a tender spot in the middle, surrounded by yellowish dead skin. The word 'callous' comes from the Latin *callosus*, meaning *thick-skinned* or *hard skinned*, from where its figurative sense as in "unfeeling" appeared.

*Emotional causes:* Because they involve a thickening of the skin, when a child has a callous, it indicates that he or she wanting to protect him or herself from the callous behaviour of others where they have been hurt, feel vulnerable and threatened, or where they have shut out and have become hardened to their *own* feelings.

Calluses occur most frequently on the heel of the foot, which relates to issues to do with the family. Perhaps the child is *digging their heels* in and refusing to shift, afraid of what the future holds or is afraid to leave the security of the family to find their own way ahead. Another common place for calluses to occur is on the inside edge of the foot below the big toe, which relates to the heart, where adults and children often feel huge grief and emotional pain.

**Foot Shapes** also are relevant and indicate an overall personality. When babies are small the shapes of their feet are relatively similar, but as they get older, so they develop unique characteristics, just like their personalities.

The feet may be long and thin indicating a more gentle aesthetic personality, while broader feet show a grounded, practical personality, particularly if the toes are straight. Feet that have narrow heels and broad tops may be less grounded – airheads, full of ideas but be less able to make the ideas a reality. Large long toes indicate a child full of ideas and plans, while a longer second toe than big toe shows natural leadership traits, although because the toe is out there as such the child may be vulnerable to attack.

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