INTRODUCTION
Your child has been diagnosed with a curly toe. This describes a toe which a flexion contracture, which cause the toes to flex and bend under the adjacent toe. It is uncommon for this to cause problems. Some will spontaneous resolve by age six. There can be pressure between the toes, which can cause pressure sores or blisters. Shoes with extra space or padding can be used if needed. If skin problems continue to occur, a simple surgical procedure is effective to improve the toe position.

BACKGROUND
Curly toe is the term used to describe toes which have a small flexion contracture, which causes it to curve down and under the adjacent toe. The deformity is characterized by flexion and medial deviation of the proximal joint of the toe and lateral rotation of the distal joint. The cause is congenital tightness of the flexor tendons.

There often is a positive family history consistent with autosomal dominant transmission. The natural history of the curly toe is resolution in 24 percent, and persistence in the remaining 76 percent.

DIAGNOSIS
Diagnosis is made by observation and by physical examination. Curly toes are usually present bilaterally, and most commonly affect the third or fourth toes.

X-rays may be needed to rule out other abnormalities. Other imaging is usually not needed.

TREATMENT
Taping may improve the toe position transiently, but the deformity usually returns once taping is stopped. Symptoms result from abnormal pressure on the adjacent metatarsal heads, and pain in the underlapped toe itself, which may develop corns.

Surgery is recommended for children who have persistent deformity at age six years. Simple open flexor tenotomy leads to relief of symptoms and did not lead to
hyperextension in 95 percent of 62 patients treated. Another study found similar results for flexor to extensor transfer and flexor tenotomy.

MORE INFORMATION
Further information can be obtained on the internet. Your local public library can help you if you are interested. Two good sites for expert and peer reviewed information are the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons at www.aaos.org and www.emedicine.com.

FEEDBACK
If you have questions or comments, please contact the office or submit them to the web site at www.pedortho.com.