INTRODUCTION
Your child has been diagnosed with an overlapping fifth toe. This describes a fifth toe which rotates medially and sits on top of the adjacent fourth toe. This is a minor toe anomaly and no treatment is needed if it is not problematic. This toe position can cause problems for fitting shoes and there can be rubbing between the toes, which can lead to 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 can be done to improve the toe position.

BACKGROUND
Overlapping fifth toe is the term used to describe a little toe which is positioned proximally and has internal rotation and flexion, which causes it to curve medially and over the adjacent fourth toe. The cause is unknown but may be related to a congenital tightness to the extensor tendon. The deformity is often bilateral and there often is a positive family history.

This toe deformity can lead to functional and cosmetic concerns. The functional problems relate to pressure between the toes, especially with shoe. It is estimated that 50% of patients run into this difficulty. The deformity can also be a cosmetic concern, but it is important to recognize that treatment can alter the position, but does not make the toe normal and tends to leave scars which may be equally concerning from a cosmetic standpoint.

DIAGNOSIS
Diagnosis is made by observation and by physical examination. Overlapping fifth toes are usually present bilaterally, and be associated with other toe anomalies, which can include curly toe deformity, which often affect the third or fourth toes.

Xrays 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 toe or the skin of the adjacent toe.
Surgery is recommended for children who have persistent deformity. A common way to correct overlapping 5th toe is called a Butler procedure and the toe is repositioned with unique skin incisions and often with release of the toe metatarsophalangeal joint capsule. This is usually effective to reposition the toe, but tends to leave some scarring and stiffness. Outcome is usually good.

MORE INFORMATION
Further information can be obtained on the internet. Your local public library can help you if you are interested. A good site for expert and peer reviewed information is the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons website at orthoinfo.aaos.org.

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