

Counterintuitive Advice To Get Your Child Walking Sooner

7 MIN • YOUTUBE • [HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=ZDGXGEY9JH0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZDGXGEY9JH0)

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SUMMARY

Putting socks or shoes on babies can hinder their ability to learn to walk by limiting sensory feedback from their feet, while holding their hands for support can prevent them from developing balance and coordination. Additionally, baby walkers can lead to abnormal walking patterns and muscle tightness, delaying independent walking skills.

- Babies rely on sensory feedback from their feet to learn walking, which is diminished when wearing socks or shoes.*
- Socks without non-slip grips can cause slipping on smooth surfaces, impacting confidence in walking.*
- Shoes can restrict natural foot movement, hindering muscle and arch development essential for balance and coordination.*
- Holding a child's hand while walking can provide excessive support, preventing them from learning to balance independently.*
- Free arm movement is crucial for balance; holding hands restricts this and can lead to improper walking posture.*
- Baby walkers may delay walking and encourage abnormal walking patterns, such as toe walking.*
- Walkers support a baby's weight, preventing muscle strengthening needed for independent walking.*
- Engaging in specific activities can help develop the foundational skills necessary for babies to walk independently.*

You might be surprised to learn that something as simple as putting socks or shoes on your little one's feet can actually make it harder for them to learn to walk. One reason for this is because as babies learn to walk they rely heavily on sensory information from their feet. This information is sent to their brain which then processes it and sends signals to various muscles and joints in their body guiding them on how to adjust their balance posture, and movements.

This continuous feedback loop helps babies adapt to different environments and develop a confident, natural walking pattern. When you cover their feet, you're taking away some of the sensory information their brain needs to help them walk. With less sensory input, it's more difficult for your baby to tell what kind of surface they're on, and they may struggle to adjust their movements to keep their balance and coordinate their movements as they learn to walk. Socks can be especially tricky if they don't have non-slip grips on the bottom.

On smooth surfaces like hardwood or tiled floors, your baby might slip and slide, making it tough for them to build confidence in their walking skills. Now may think that shoes would solve the grip problem and therefore be helpful. But shoes can make it hard for your baby to move their feet and toes naturally, like flexing and

extending their toes and bending their feet at the forefoot. When their feet are restricted like this, it can slow down the development of the muscles and arches that are so important balance, stability and coordination while walking.

In the long run, this can delay your baby's progress and can even cause walking problems later in life. Stiff or heavy shoes can also change the way your baby walks because they have to work so hard to lift and move their feet. This can lead to an unnatural walking pattern and put extra strain on their muscles and joints. So to help your baby learn to walk more easily, let them go barefoot as much as possible, both indoors and outdoors on safe surfaces.

Of course, there'll be times where they will need to wear shoes and for that, choose lightweight, flexible options that allow their feet to move more freely and naturally. I popped a few links in the description if you'd like to see some examples of good shoes to go with. This is one of three things that can make it harder for your little one to learn to walk that I'm going to cover in this video. This next one tends to surprise a lot of parents.

Holding your child's hand to help them walk might seem like something that is going to help them learn to develop the skills they need to walk independently. But it can actually slow down their progress. And here's why. To truly master the skills needed to independently walk, babies need to undergo a process of trial and error, complete with wobbles and falls. It is through these wobbles and falls that babies learn how to use their muscles effectively, adjust their balance, and develop the coordination skills required to walk.

However, when you hold their hands, you end up providing a lot of support. You naturally help them stay balanced when they wobble or lean to one side. And although this prevents them from falling, it hinders their ability to learn how to fix their own balance and find their center of gravity while walking. Holding their hands also stops them from moving their arms in different directions as they walk. While this might not seem important, it is. And this is because being able to move their arms freely helps your baby keep their balance and coordinate their steps.

So when you prevent them from using their arms like this, it's harder for them to perfect their walking skills. And lastly, holding your baby's hands while they walk can also inadvertently cause them to tilt their body forward which in turn encourages them to stand and walk on their toes, which makes the task of walking a lot more challenging. So while it may appear that holding your baby's hands while walking is helpful, the extra support you give actually makes it harder for them to learn the important skills they need to take their first steps on their own.

Now, some people like to do this as a fun activity with their child, and that's great. I'm not saying you shouldn't do it at all. By all means, continue doing it if it's something you love. But just keep in mind that while holding your baby's hand while walking can be a fun activity, it can also become an activity that your baby wants to do all the time, which is exactly what happened with my good friend. Her gorgeous little girl loved walking around with their hands held.

And initially my friend was really happy to do it because it was an activity that they both enjoyed doing together. But it got to the point that that was all she wanted to do. So much so that when they came to visit, I would take turns with her just to give my friend a break. My friend couldn't wait for her little one to start walking as she was in absolute agony with constant back pain. And after four months of daily handholding, her daughter finally took her first independent steps.

And on that day, we were both celebrating as my friend could finally sit down and enjoy her morning coffee with me, as much as you can when you have toddlers playing nearby and her back pain finally disappeared. Another skill that my friend's daughter was really good at was communicating. If you'd like to know what you can expect in terms of your child's communication skills based on their age, you can grab a copy of my free communication milestone chart in the description box below.

Now let's talk about a device that's often advertised as something that helps babies learn to walk but can actually do more harm than good. I'm talking about baby walkers. To be clear, I'm referring to baby walkers where a baby stands in the middle supported by a slung seat with wheels around the outside. These are very different to push walkers or push trolleys where the baby stands behind them and pushes them along. Research suggests that baby walkers might not only delay your baby's ability to walk on their own, but they may also contribute to the development of abnormal walking patterns like walking on their toes.

When learning to walk, babies need to master the heel-to-toe motion where they place their heel on the ground first, followed by their toes. This movement helps them develop a natural and stable gait. But when babies use a walker, its design encourages them to move differently. Instead of the natural heel-to-toe motion, they tend to propel themselves forward using their toes. This toe first motion doesn't promote the development of a healthy walking pattern. When babies spend a lot of time in this position it can also cause their calf muscles to tighten. Tight calf muscles then make it hard for them to put their feet flat on the ground and this can lead to a habit of standing and walking on their toes. This habit, if allowed to continue, can lead to a physical limitation where their calf muscles actually shorten and they aren't physically able to walk using a normal heel to toe pattern, causing ongoing problems that can be very difficult to resolve.

But there's more to consider. Baby walkers also partially support your baby's weight, which means they're not fully bearing their own body weight. And this prevents them from strengthening their legs and core muscles, which are essential for independent walking. Plus, when your baby is in a walker, they don't need to maintain their balance or coordinate their movements like they would when they're learning to walk naturally, since the device actually takes care of it for them. This can result in undeveloped balance and coordination skills, which can make it more difficult for them to walk on their own later on.

Now I've just told you three things to avoid, but you probably also want to know what you can do to help your little one learn to walk. In this video, you'll learn six really helpful activities that you can do with your little one to help develop the foundational skills required to start walking on their own. With these tips, you'll get them on the right track to walking independently in no time.