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## Foot Arches -What Are the Arches of the Feet?

By [Elizabeth Quinn](#), About.com Guide *Updated September 14, 2009*

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**Definition:** The foot arches are formed by the bones, ligaments, and tendons of the foot and are essential for both movement and weight bearing.

The human foot is an incredibly complex mechanism that has two very important functions:

1. Weight bearing

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an arch.

The foot has three distinct arches. Two "longitudinal" arches (one on each side) run from front to back; one "transverse arch" runs across the midfoot from inside to outside.

The "**medial longitudinal arch**" is the most prominent foot arch



Foot Type  
*Photo @ Wikimedia Commons*

2. Propulsion (movement)

In order to perform these functions, the foot requires a high degree of stability as well as flexibility. The [multiple bones and joints of the foot](#) give it the necessary flexibility, but in order to fully support any weight, the bones of the foot need to form

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and what is typically referred to as simply, "the arch." It runs from front to back along the inside of the foot. This arch absorbs the majority of the shock of impact while walking, jumping or running.

The "**lateral longitudinal arch**," runs parallel to the medial longitudinal arch, but is along the outer edge of the foot. Foot print #0 above, shows how prominent this arch can be; it is most visible in people with very high arches. .

The final foot arch is called the "**transverse arch**." It runs across the midfoot from outside to inside. This arch also provides support and flexibility to the foot.

The arches of the foot are maintained not only by the shapes of the bones as well as by ligaments. In addition, muscles and tendons play an important role in supporting the arches.

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The arches, along with the other tissues of the foot, help determine a person's [foot type](#) (see image). The most common foot types include:

- [High Arches](#) (Footprint #0 and #1)
- **Neutral Foot Type** (Footprint #2)
- [Flat Feet](#) (Footprint #3)

### **Suggested Reading**

- [Foot Anatomy and Physiology](#)
- [Ankle Anatomy and Physiology](#)
- [Vibram FiveFingers](#)

### **Suggested Reading**

- [Over-pronation \(definition\)](#)
- [Pronation \(definition\)](#)
- [What Is a Stress Fracture of the Foot?](#)

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- [Supination \(definition\)](#)
- [Ankle Injury Rehab - Ankle Injury Rehab Program Basics](#)
- [Foot and Ankle Pain and Injuries](#)

### **Related Articles**

- [Foot Anatomy and Physiology](#)
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