

Finding the Proper Shoe Fit

Finding the right shoe for your foot allows your foot to be well supported and positioned. This provides a good base of support to properly align your whole body. Good shoe fit is based on several things. Below we have discussed three of the more important areas.

Shape

Select a shoe that conforms as nearly as possible to the shape of your foot. The ball of the foot should fit at the widest part of the shoe. This is where the shoe is designed to flex. The “last” of the shoe is the model on which the shoe is built. There are three types: straight, semi-curved and curved. Each shoe company works from a specific “last” – find the company whose “last” conforms to your foot most closely.



Arch Type

The **flat foot or low arch** usually exhibits a great deal of pronation, landing on the outside of the heel and rolling inward excessively. Over pronators tend to have flexible feet so this foot needs maximum stability and control. **Avoid highly cushioned, highly flexible shoes.**

The **high arched** foot underpronates and does not absorb shock well. This type of foot may supinate or roll outward when walking. These feet are more rigid and cannot absorb shock well; this foot needs a highly cushioned sole with maximum shock absorption plus a great deal of flexibility to facilitate proper foot motion.

Wear Patterns

Observe your shoes for uneven wear patterns, which may indicate improper gait or other movement problems. Major causes of abnormal wear are limb-length differences and excessive flat foot. The wrong shoe type can also cause abnormal wear patterns. Look at different types of shoes you wear; if the abnormal wear pattern is consistent, then it is usually a biomechanical flaw. If only one style of shoes has abnormal wear, then look at that shoe for differences from all the other shoes. If you do observe an abnormal wear pattern your physical therapist will be able to watch the way you walk and should be able to determine the cause.

How to Determine When Your Shoes Are Worn Out:

1. Inspect the shoes to see if any glued or stitched areas are pulling away from the seams. If this occurs it is time for a change.
2. Place the shoe on a hard, flat surface and look at it from the rear. The entire upper part of the shoe should be centered and not leaning or bowing to the side.
3. When looking from the rear of the shoes, the sole should rest level to the surface. If the shoe rocks side to side, replace it.
4. Push on the heel counter to see if it is rigid. If not, the shoe will not support your foot.

10 Tips for a Good Shoe Fit



Years of wear and tear are hard on our feet. So can disease, poor circulation, improperly trimming toenails, and wearing shoes that don't fit properly. Problems with our feet are often the first signs of more serious medical conditions such as arthritis, diabetes, and nerve and circulatory disorders.

What can you do to prevent foot problems?

- Check your feet regularly or have a member of your family check them.
- Keep blood circulating to your feet as much as possible. Do this by putting your feet up when you are sitting or lying down, stretching if you've been sitting for a long time, taking frequent walks, having a gentle foot massage or taking a warm foot bath. Avoid shoes that place pressure on your feet.
- Try not to expose your feet to cold temperatures.
- Don't sit for long periods of time (especially with your legs crossed).
- Don't smoke.

Wearing comfortable shoes that fit well can prevent many foot ailments. You should note the following:

1. The size of your feet changes as you grow older so always have your feet measured before buying shoes. The best time to measure your feet is at the end of the day when they are largest.
2. Most of us have one foot larger than the other; fit your shoe to the larger foot.
3. Select shoes by the way it fits your foot, not the size, style or color, etc.
4. Select a shoe that is shaped like your foot.
5. During the fitting process, make sure there is enough space ($3/8''$ to $1/2''$) for your longest toe at the end of each shoe when you are standing up.
6. Make sure the ball of your foot fits comfortably in the widest part of the shoe.
7. Don't buy shoes that feel too tight but expect them to stretch to fit.
8. Your heel should fit comfortably in the shoe with minimal slipping.
9. Walk in both shoes to make sure they fit and feel right. Then take them home and spend some time walking on carpet to make sure the fit is a good one.
10. Characteristics of a good shoe:
 - a. The upper part of the shoe should be made of a soft, flexible material matching the shape of your foot.
 - b. Shoes made of leather can reduce the possibility of skin irritations.
 - c. Soles should provide solid footing and not be slick and slippery.
 - d. Thick soles cushion your feet when walking on hard surfaces.
 - e. Low-heeled shoes are more comfortable, safe and less damaging than high-heeled shoes.