



Your Shoes: Fit and Function

Shoe selection is important for comfort as well as keeping you performing at the highest level possible. Fashion may come and go, but the basic use of a shoe to protect your foot remains unchanged.

While improper shoe wear can cause injury, I more frequently see shoes that contribute to continued symptoms from an underlying condition.

Shoe Anatomy



Upper



Flexibility of the heel counter



Flexibility of the midsole



Here are some things to consider:

- Shoes should feel right the first time you try them on. Don't wait thru a "break in period" for the shoe to feel better. It either fits- or it doesn't.
- If you have no problems with your feet- as long as the shoe feels good you will probably be fine. However if you have foot or ankle problems, the shoe design can certainly affect your symptoms.
- If you wear orthotics, bring these with you when trying on shoes. They will make the shoe fit differently.
- For new running shoes, wear these for several hours of walking activities prior to taking a run.
- Consider your support: The more surface area in contact with the ground the more stable the shoe is. If you are going to wear a heel, a wide heel is more stable than a narrow one and is less likely to cause injury.
- Make sure the shoe is properly sized - As we age, our feet get longer and wider - don't assume that your shoe size is unchanged even if you are thinking of buying the exact shoe you've worn for years.
- When standing you should have 1/2 to 1 inch of room past your toes.
- Make sure the heel fits well so it does not ride up in the counter. The toe box should be wide enough to fit comfortably; it should not be too loose so the foot moves excessively, or too tight to squeeze the foot side to side.
- Shoes that lace-up or have velcro allow a more secure fit than slip-ons.
- An outline of a patient's foot and their shoe overlaid reveal areas that are painful due to the shoe. (See image to right)





When to replace shoes:

- Running/walking shoes are suggested to be replaced every 300-500 miles. You may get the sense that the “spring” is gone from the shoe or that you just fatigue more easily. How quickly a shoe wears out depends on how heavy you are, how you strike, the surface you run/walk on, and the shoe itself. More expensive, light-weight shoes designed for performance can wear out faster than mid-price range shoes due to materials selected for weight reduction.
- Though not very common today, a cobbler (one who alters and repairs shoes) can prolong the life of your shoes especially if only the sole is worn but the remainder of the shoe is good.
- Replace shoes if you are wearing through the heel counter or the collar, if the tread is worn down, or if stitching connecting the sole to the upper is coming apart.

Diabetic Shoes:

A shoe designed with a wide toe box and extra depth to prevent pressure sores on the toes, it is most often utilized with a custom orthotic designed to distribute the pressure on the foot to minimize risk of ulceration. A pedorthotist should assist with ensuring a proper fit.

Rocker Bottom Shoe

This type of shoe is helpful to relieve pain from arthritis of the midfoot and ankle. I am unaware of any studies that reveal benefit of these shoes on low back pain symptoms which the manufactures used to claim.

