

Choosing good footwear

Who is this leaflet for?

You have been given this information leaflet, so you will know what types of shoes are best to wear. This might be because your foot or ankle is painful from arthritis or because you have certain medical conditions that mean you need to think about your footwear choices carefully.

Why is good footwear important?

Footwear plays a critical role in the development and prevention of foot and ankle conditions. Specifically, good footwear can help prevent skin ulcers, blisters, callosities, and help prevent some deformities which develop over time. When skin on the feet becomes blistered in people with delicate skin, they are at risk of infection. Good footwear can prevent this.

The other main benefit of wearing appropriate footwear is to reduce pain. Patients with ankle or foot osteoarthritis may benefit from shoes which are stiff and limit the movement of their painful joints. Patients with heel or forefoot pain may benefit from footwear which supports the arch of the foot and in some cases may benefit from footwear with extra cushioning.

In general, wearing shoes that fit properly will prevent future problems, help you to have less ankle/ foot pain, and allow you to continue to do your normal day-to-day activities.

What is the right type of shoe?

There are certain features to look for when looking for the right type of shoe.

- A low-heeled shoe is usually better (less than 1 ¼ inches)
- Shoes with laces or straps to close them are better than a slip-on shoe
- Shoes that do not have prominent seams. Seams can rub on the skin of your foot and cause irritation.
- Shoes made of natural materials will shape around your foot better than artificial ones. Again, this will prevent rubbing.
- Make sure they fit in length- not too loose or too tight.

Choosing good footwear (continued)

- The front of the shoe must be “foot shaped” and allow enough room for your toes. Narrow shoes can pinch the toes, cause pressure and pain. See the picture to the right, the one on the left is correct and the one of the right is too tight and causing the toes to overlap.



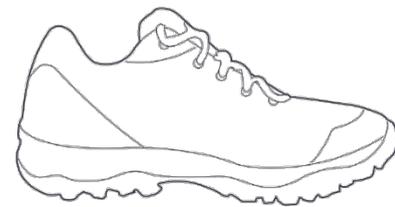
What do I do when buying new shoes?

There are some things that you should think about if you are going to buy a new pair of shoes.

- Get your feet measured in length and width. Your shoe size can change, so find out what shoe size you are now. It is more important how the shoe feels on your foot than its size number.
- When trying on a new pair of shoes, try to do so later in the day. Our feet are slightly more swollen later in the day. This will ensure you get the right size.
- Always try on new shoes on both feet and with socks that you would normally wear.
- Walk around the store to make sure they are comfortable to move in.
- If you have orthotics (insoles or ankle supports) that you are supposed to wear, bring these with you when purchasing new shoes. You may find that you need a size larger than normal because of this.
- If you have orthotics, look for shoes that have a removable lining. You can then take out the lining and place in your orthotics instead.
- Wear the new shoes around the house first. Wear them for 20-30 minutes indoors, then take off your shoes to check your feet. If you notice any areas of discolouration or rubbing, perhaps those shoes do not fit your properly and may need returning to the shop.



This shoe bends too much. This is something to try and avoid.



If you grab the end of your shoe and it does not change its shape at all, this shoe is sufficiently stiff.

Specific advice

If you have delicate skin on your feet or altered sensation, it is important to check your feet before and after you have worn shoes.

Individuals with osteoarthritis of the ankle should consider lace up boots to help prevent movement at the ankle. Similarly, if you suffer with osteoarthritis of the mid or forefoot then you should choose a stiff soled shoe. Test a shoe by holding it by the ends and ensuring it cannot be bent in half easily.

Individuals with conditions affecting their heel or forefoot should purchase trainer type footwear which:

- Still has adequate stiffness
- Has a softer sole for cushioning to alleviate pain when weight bearing
- Has adequate arch support which allows your weight to be distributed more equally across the foot

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