

Footwear advice sheet

There is no right or wrong shoe brand or place to buy shoes. It is more important to get to know your feet, know what works for you for your lifestyle and the different activities you do. Footwear that don’t fit properaly can cause foot problems, for example:

* Callus
* Corns
* Blisters
* Hammer toes
* Bunions
* Sprains
* Ingrowing nails
* Ulceration
* Delayed healing.

**How can I find out what would fit my foot?**

There are several things you can do from home to think about what works best for your feet:

* Draw around your feet on some paper (compare both as they are often different shapes and sizes) Then, cut the shape out and see if they fit into your shoes without crumpling the edges. The paper template should fit neatly and easily
* Try standing and walking around barefooted. Look at your feet, they will spread and appear differently compared with how they look when you are non-weight bearing.
* Test your shoes - Does the shape suit your foot? Does the widest part of your foot fit on the widest part of the shoe? What about the depth at the toe? Well fitted shoes should allow you to move your toes freely without them being squashed.

**Help in choosing footwear**

A correctly fitted shoe allows the foot to function without any restriction on movement, preventing discomfort and damage to the foot. Footwear needs to be long, wide and deep enough for your feet. Pointed or tapered footwear can restrict foot movement and cause discomfort. Here are some points to consider when purchasing new shoes:

* Shoes with a removable insole liner are beneficial if an orthosis is needed.
* Buy shoes at the end of the day as your feet swell and become bigger. Your two feet may be differently sized, so make sure you fit to the largest.
* It is important that your footwear have a secure fastening such as laces, buckles or Velcro which holds your foot securely in the shoe and prevent the foot sliding forward and cramping the toes. Shoes must feel comfortable as soon you try them on, breaking them in can harm your feet.
* Feet change over time, revisit your size and style periodically
* Shoes are made in different sole shapes (‘called lasts’).
* In most cases, shoes should be flexible to allow normal movement

**What should I avoid?**

* A “slip on” court shoe, sandal or flip flop is kept on the foot by curling the toes
* Slip-on shoes are usually narrow to stay on the foot and this can damage the toes or cause corns and calluses
* A pointed toe box will squash your toes together and can cause bony deformity
* A heel that is too high will cause the foot to be pushed to the end of the shoe, crushing the toes. High heels can also alter your posture by putting strain on your back, knees and ankles, this can cause or aggravate foot deformities.
* A shoe made of plastic will cause your foot to sweat
* A thin, hard sole, will not cushion your foot adequately
* Avoid shoes that are too loose and could rub or cause you to walk abnormally.

**Wear the right shoe for your activity**

Age causes developmental changes in the feet (osteoarthritis). Sometimes, a stiffer soled or rocker shaped sole will help by reducing how much the foot has to bend when walking. For example, ladies low (fastened) wedge heels, walking shoes/trainers, brogues, running shoes or walking sandals may help.

If you are playing sports, it’s important to make sure that your footwear is the correct type for the activity you are doing.

Keep smart fashion shoes for special occasions and keep the time you wear them to a minimum.

**Sources of information**

For more information please visit the Healthy Footwear Guide – www.healthy-footwear-guide.com

If you suffer from specific conditions such as Diabetes or Rheumatoid Arthritis please take more specific advice from your practitioner.

**Important information**

This patient information is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.