

HOW TO SELECT AND PROPERLY FIT SHOES

During our entire lives we wear shoes. From infancy until our final steps, we are preoccupied with the decision of which shoes are best for our feet. Shoes are the most important part of our wardrobe. The entire musculoskeletal system is supported by our feet and influenced by the shoes placed on them. Our daily comfort is dependent on the shoes we choose. Yet, very few people have the knowledge, or take the time, to select the correct, properly fitted shoes. Take the time to read this brochure, for it surely will be a good investment in your feet and lead to better foot health and comfort.

ANATOMY OF A SHOE

The heel is one of the most important parts of a shoe. It helps control the foot at the very beginning of the stance or standing phase of the gait or walking cycle. The heel forms large base for weight bearing. The angulation of the back of the shoe to the bottom, or sole of the shoe is called the set of the heel. Any tendency of the set to be angled improperly may cause foot, ankle, knee, or low back discomfort. The height of the heel is more often determined by fashion, not by function. Lower and wider heels are more supportive and offer less chance of injury by the catching or twisting of your heel. The heel counter refers to that portion of the shoe which grasps the heel of the foot on the sides and back. It prevents the foot from sliding up and down in the shoe while walking. Most importantly, it stabilizes or holds the position of the heel upon ground contact. The shoe becomes less supportive as the heel counter gets softer or breaks down and loses shape. The

sole is the entire bottom of the shoe. It should be flat except for a gently slope upwards under the toes. The upper is the material forming the body of the shoe over the top of the foot. Construction and design can be quite variable. A stiffer upper holds your foot firmer over the sole, but must fit without pressure on the toes or sides of the foot. The “last” (shape of shoe) is the template, or pattern, over which the entire shoe is designed. Rigid shoes may be made from a wooden last. However, most shoes today are constructed with a firm cardboard “last”, a fabric stitched last (slip lasted), or a combination of both. The lining is found inside the shoe and should be smooth.

The materials of each portion of the shoe will be dependent on the type of shoe (e.g. dress, casual, athletic etc.) and quality of construction. With few exceptions, you will get what you pay for! A better shoe may have the following:

- *A combination last for a more precise or accurate fit.
- *Properly sized heel height made with shock absorbing material.
- *A firm heel counter with a reinforcing plastic heel stabilizer for added support and to maintain the shape of the heel.
- *A good quality full grain or garment leather upper.
- *A quality, smoothly applied leather lining.

FINDING THE RIGHT SHOE SIZE

Amazingly, our shoe sizing system dates back to the middle ages. Shoemakers adopted a measurement method using barley corns placed end to end. Thirty-six barley corns equaled one foot or twelve inches. One full shoe size was made to equal one barley corn, or one third of an inch. Therefore, each half shoe size equals one-sixth of an inch. In the U.S. today, shoe lengths are measured from an arbitrarily advanced point on a shoe stick- 3 1/3 inches in front of the heel. Widths are designated as AAA, AA, A, B, C, D, E, EE and EEE, AAA being the narrowest and EEE being the widest.

PRACTICAL AND SIMPLE METHODS OF FITTING SHOES INCLUDE

*Determine your shoes length from the tip of your longest toe. In many people, this is the 2nd toe, not the big toe! The width of your thumb should fit between the tip of your longest toe and the top of the shoe. The length of the shoe size determined by lining up the ball of the big toe joint or where you might get a bunion with the widest part of the sole of the shoe. When the toe box area of the shoe is too hard to feel the ends of your toes, run your finger downward from the ball of the big toe joint and the widest part of the sole of the shoe. When they match and line up evenly, this will give you the correct shoe length.

*The shoe should be evaluated at the widest portion of your forefoot (ball of the big toe joint or where you could get a bunion) while bearing weight. Your shoe width size should match your foot width, and will allow you to grab a small portion of the upper material

between two fingers over the crease of your toes. This will also give you a fit for proper shoe depth.

CHILDREN'S SHOES

Shoe fit is sometimes difficult in children. Your child may be unable to explain that his/her shoes are too tight. Carefully examine your child's bare feet daily for any redness or areas of irritation. Lasts in children's shoes are classified as straight, out flare, or in flare. For most children, a straight lasted shoe is best. However, if your child in-toes, or walks with a pigeon-toe style (when the feet or toes point towards each other) or out-toes (with a Charlie Chaplin style of walking or walking like a duck), shoe therapy with a properly chosen last will be helpful. You should have his/her feet examined by your podiatrist to determine if the condition warrants a change in last or other form of treatment (shoe therapy, orthotics, etc.)

ATHLETIC FOOTWEAR

Sneakers have evolved tremendously since the early Keds, PF Flyers, and Converse Chuck Taylor All Stars! Now there is a shoe for virtually every sport. Generally, the shoe should have certain characteristics. Cushioning is vital to minimize the shock and trauma to the skeletal system. The best shoes will have different grades of rubber and synthetics (E.V.A) for maximal shock absorption. Rear foot stability can make the difference between a great athlete and an injured athlete. Look for perpendicular (straight heel counters), strong heel counters, and thermoplastic heel stabilizers.

Forefoot flexibility and stability will differ from sport to sport. An aerobics shoe will be made flexible and less stable than a tennis shoe. Aerobics involves jumping in one place while tennis requires quick lateral (side to side) movements. Ankle support is increased with mid-and high top shoes. They offer more resistance to ankle inversion (turning your foot in towards the other foot, causing a strain on the outer part of the ankle) and eversion (turning your foot away from the other foot causing a strain on the inner part of the ankle).

TIPS ON BUYING SHOES

* When trying on shoes bring the socks you anticipate wearing the most often. Also bring any inserts or orthotics.

*Shop at stores with the knowledgeable salespeople and a larger selection of styles and brands.

* The shoes should feel comfortable in the store. Do not anticipate shoes to "break in".

*Always try on both shoes and fit your larger foot.

*Shop for shoes later in the day. Feet tend to swell as the day progresses. Many minor foot ailments can be relieved with a properly fitted and carefully selected shoe. Your podiatrist can make recommendations to help you achieve your peak performance and comfort while wearing any style of dress, work, athletic or everyday shoe.

NAME OF PATIENT:

APPOINTMENT:

Date: _____ Time: _____

SPECIAL LABORATORY TEST:

() Return appointment to check fit of new shoes

() Return appointment to check fit of orthotics in new shoes

() Other: _____

MANAGING PHYSICIAN (M.D. /D.O.) FOR DIABETES

Referred to: _____

Address: _____

GAIT ANALYSIS STUDY:

Date: _____ Time: _____

Office: _____ Other: _____

SHOES RECOMMENDED:

() Walking () Jogging () Dress

() Work () Soft Leather

() Suede

() Other: _____

STOCKINGS: Support Hose

() Above the Knee () Below
the Knee

() Other: _____

ORTHOTICS: _____

FOOT HYGIENE: _____

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