

Shoe Buying Tips

“They’ll feel more comfortable once I’ve worn them in...” You should not need to ‘break in’ new shoes. Shoes that fit well will feel comfortable straightaway! If shoes feel like they need to be broken in, they do not fit you and may cause injury.

Take the socks you wear most often and any insoles that you use when going to buy shoes, so you can make sure your feet will fit into the shoes properly with your insoles in place.

Shop at stores with well trained staff and a large selection of styles, sizes and fittings.

Always try on both shoes and fit your larger foot. If your feet tend to swell during the day, shop for shoes later in the day when your feet will be larger.

For maximum comfort, buy a shoe with adjustable fastening, such as laces or a strap with a buckle. This will help your foot feel secure and allow you to have space for your toes without your foot slipping forwards.

It is not the cost, but the fit that is important when buying shoes. Paying a lot for shoes will not make them fit better if they are not right for your feet. It is all about shape and fit.

If you have any questions regarding the information in this leaflet, please contact Podiatry Services.

Further information about the service and how to manage a range of foot health problems yourself, can also be found on our website: www.livewellsouthwest.co.uk/project/podiatry

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Podiatry Services Patient Information Leaflet



Choosing the Right Footwear

(March 2023)

Advice on how to choose good footwear

We support people to lead independent, healthy lives

Many simple foot problems occur because of shoes that don't fit people's feet properly. To help prevent damage to your feet, try applying the following guidelines when you buy footwear, whether is for adults or children:

As a general rule, you should avoid wearing slippers unless they are similar to shoes and follow the guidelines below. Otherwise they may be worse for your feet than poorly fitted shoes!. To get good use out of properly fitting footwear, you may like to buy a pair of shoes to wear at home instead, using the guidelines below.

Alternatively, why not just walk around bare-footed or wear a pair of socks with rubber grips on the soles. (Note: Some patients such as those with diabetes should never go barefooted – ask your Podiatrist if you are unsure).

Choose the right shoes for the right occasion. If you will need to be on your feet for a long time or have to walk a long way, wear something that fits well and supports your feet. Save dress shoes for special occasions requiring little walking. Good fitting footwear will also help prevent falls.

What Makes A Good Shoe?

With shoes it is all about the fit and style, not necessarily the brand or even the cost. Sizes vary between manufacturers and are not universal, so only use the size on the label as a rough guide. To find a well-fitting shoe consider the following:

LENGTH: The right length of shoe should leave a small gap (thumb width) between the tip of your longest toe and the end of the shoe. As we get older our feet often become longer and wider.

WIDTH: This is measured across the ball of your foot not the toe of the shoe. You need to ensure that you have the correct width fitting across the middle of your foot, but also that the toe box is equally wide enough to fit your toes in without squashing them together (see below).

FASTENINGS: This holds the foot in the shoe. Shoes should have laces, straps with buckles, or Velcro to keep them in place. 'Slip on' shoes are kept in place either because they are too small for the foot, or by curling the toes for grip, so avoid slip on footwear for everyday use.

TOE BOX: The toe of the shoe should match your foot shape (square or rounded) and be deep and wide enough to fit your toes without pressing down on the tops or ends of the toes.

It should have room for your toes to lie flat and not rub or get squashed. Make sure the width of the shoe is correct and avoid tapered toe boxes.

HEEL: This takes a large proportion of a person's weight. Unfortunately, the height of the heel is often determined by fashion, not by the needs of our feet. Ideally, the heel should have a broad base and the heel height should be no greater than 4cm or about 1½ inches.

HEEL COUNTER: This portion of the shoe grasps the heel of the foot at the sides and back, preventing the heel from sliding up and down while walking. Most importantly, it helps maintain the position of the heel on the ground. As the heel counter softens or breaks down and loses its shape and the shoe becomes less supportive. When shoes become old and worn, replace them to make sure you get the correct support and prevent accidents.

SOLE: It should be flat, except for a gentle slope upwards under the toes. Try to buy something that will cushion your foot slightly. Leather soles tend to be very slippery and hard so they are best avoided

UPPER: The material that forms the main part of the shoe covering the top of the foot. Ideally, it should be composed of a natural material such as leather, and should be soft without hard seams or stitching.

LINING: Found inside the shoe it should be smooth and without seams.

Simple Method of Fitting Shoes

One of the simplest ways to see if a shoe will fit is to use a cardboard template. Often when trying on a shoe it feels comfortable and it is only later when it starts to rub that you realise it does not fit quite so well as you thought!

Whilst standing on a firm surface, place your foot onto a thin piece of cardboard and ask somebody to draw around your foot whilst you stand up straight, looking forwards. Cut out the template of your foot and use it in shoe shops by placing it into a shoe you have chosen. If the cardboard does not fit into the shoe properly lying flat, or is squashed up in the toe box then the shoe does not fit your foot.

If the cardboard does not fit or gets squashed in the toe of the shoe you know it will do the same to your foot.

Keep any packaging & wear shoes indoors on carpeted areas for a few days first so that you can return them intact if they do not fit properly.