

Shoe Fitting and Buying Tips

Foot problems will affect most of us at some point in our lives. One general recommendation that will ease the discomfort of most common foot problems is proper fitting shoes. Poorly fitting shoes can make symptoms of foot pain worse and in many cases be the primary cause of the problem. It is important to purchase footwear that fits properly from the moment you buy them. Never buy footwear hoping they will “break in” later.

People are more than twice as likely to purchase their footwear too small. Signs that your shoes fit too small include “foot cramping” or “falling asleep” while walking or running as well as blistering on or between your toes. Properly fitted shoes allow adequate room to freely wiggle your toes. Poorly fitting shoes can also cause or aggravate bunions, calluses, hammertoes, and other common foot problems. For many people with more serious conditions like diabetes, proper fitting footwear is even more critical.

There are many things to consider when purchasing new footwear. The **fit and support** of the footwear are the two most important. You can benefit from having your feet measured and professionally fitted by experts who understand the way footwear is supposed to fit. Canadian Footwear has those fitting experts who can help you make the right choice.

Here are some points to consider regarding proper shoe fit:

- Trying on shoes later in the day is always best. This will ensure your footwear fits correctly even if your feet have become more swollen throughout the day.
- Have both feet measured every year. Your left and right foot are most likely not the same size and may change in size from year to year. (your feet never stop changing)
- Always fit the larger foot. Adjustments can be made to your footwear to help fit the smaller foot.

- Purchase footwear that matches the general shape of your foot. (don't try to fit a square peg in a round hole)
- The footwear must allow adequate toe room while standing. There should be 3/8" to 1/2" of space between your longest toe and the end of the shoe (approximately a thumb's width)
- The widest part of your foot should sit in the widest part of the shoe
- Shoes should have a comfortable snug fit but should not feel tight or binding.
- Your heels should fit comfortably in your shoes with minimal slippage.
- Walk around in the shoe and be sure they feel comfortable. Make sure there are no pressure points from seams.

Footwear Sizing

When purchasing footwear it is important to recognize that you have a **"foot size"** and not a "shoe size." Every footwear manufacturer will use different patented "lasts" or foot forms to make their footwear. A size "8D" for example will vary in fit from brand to brand and even between styles within the same brand. This is where the expertise of our professional shoe fitters is a benefit as they understand the subtle differences in product fit between the many brands and styles. They also understand the fit differences between footwear categories.

Here is an example of some common fitting differences between the different categories of footwear:

If you wear a Men's 8 in an athletic shoe you may likely wear a 7-7.5 in a dress shoe, a 7 in a steel toe work boot and an 8.5 or 9 in a snowmobile boot.

These sizes may vary again when we compare brands and specific styles.

Multiple-Width Fittings

Canadian Footwear is proud to carry a variety of quality footwear brands that offer multiple width fittings. The likelihood of finding footwear that fits you perfectly is much greater when you wear brands that offer multiple width fittings. As with most things we wear, the correct width is as important as the correct length. (imagine buying a pair of blue jeans if they only had an inseam measurement and no waist measurement)

Here are the standard shoe widths you will find on most footwear:

Women's Shoe Widths					
4A	2A	B	D	2E	4E
X-Narrow	Narrow	Standard	Wide	X-Wide	XX-Wide

Men's Shoe Widths					
2A	B	D	2E	4E	6E
X-Narrow	Narrow	Standard	Wide	X-Wide	XX-Wide

Some brands may not use the above standardized widths and simply refer to their footwear as narrow, medium, wide etc... The key to remember is that in the end, the size and width written on the box doesn't matter, it's the FIT of shoe on your foot that matters! When choosing footwear and undecided between sizes, you are better off to choose the larger size. It is much easier to adjust the fit of a bigger shoe with socks, insoles or a different lacing pattern than it is to try and make a short shoe longer.

Evaluating Shoe Support

There are several factors that determine whether a shoe will offer good support:

HEEL COUNTER - The heel counter is the hard piece in the back of the shoe that controls the foot's heel motion from side to side when you move. A strong heel counter increases stability providing better support for the foot. To quickly test the effectiveness of the shoe's heel counter, place the shoe in the palm of your hand and put your thumb in the mid-portion of the heel counter and try to push the back of the shoe. If the heel counter does not bend very much it is strong.

TORSIONAL STABILITY - This checks for how easily the shoe twists. The shoe should have some flexibility, but if it bends very easily it is too flexible. The torsional stability of the shoe prevents the foot from being twisted or turned when in motion, helping to reduce muscle fatigue from compensating for the instability. If you hold the toe of the shoe in one hand and the heel in the other, twisting it in opposite directions with each hand should be quite difficult.

MIDFOOT BEND TEST - The shoe should not bend in the middle (arch region). It should only bend at the ball of the foot, which matches where the foot would naturally bend. To test for this, hold the shoe in both hands at opposite ends, and try to bring your hands together. If the shoe bends very easily in the middle, as very soft-soled shoes often do, the shoe will not provide good stability to the foot.

REMOVABLE LINERS - Shoes with removable liners are more versatile than those without them. Removable liners enable a knowledgeable footwear and foot orthotic expert to modify the shoe, if required, to help improve the function and fit of the shoe. A removable liner could also be replaced by a custom-made foot orthotic or an over-the-counter device, if necessary without greatly altering the fit of the shoe.