

SHOE FITTING

PEDORTHIC POINTERS FOR PATIENTS

Properly fitted footwear is very important whether or not you currently have foot problems. An improperly fitted shoe can be harmful to otherwise perfectly healthy feet by causing problems such as corns, calluses, blisters, bunions and ingrown toenails.

How to Evaluate Support

- **Heel Counter** -To determine the supportiveness of a shoe, you should first make sure that it has a good heel counter. The heel counter is the hard piece in the back of the shoe that controls the foot's motion from side-to-side. You can quickly test the effectiveness of a shoe's heel counter by placing the shoe in the palm of your hand and putting your thumb in the mid-portion of the heel, trying to bend the back of the shoe. A heel counter that does not bend very much will provide superior motion control.
- **Torsional Stability** -The torsional stability of the shoe should also be tested to prevent the foot from being twisted or turned when in motion. If you hold the toe of the shoe in one hand and the heel in the other, twisting should be quite difficult. Some shoes have steel shanks in them to increase their torsional stability. The shoe should have some flexibility, but if it bends with very little force it is too flexible. It should only bend at the widest part of the shoe, where the ball of your foot sits. Dress shoes with thin soles are often very weak in their torsional stability and therefore provide little support to the foot.
 - **Bend Test** -When purchasing new footwear, hold the shoe in both hands at opposite ends, and bring your hands together. Ideally, the shoe should only bend at the ball of the foot, which matches the movement of the foot. If this is not done, the shoe may cause increased pressure on the ball and top of the foot, damaging the joints and soft tissue. Very soft-soled shoes often have little resistance to this test and therefore typically provide little stability to the foot.

How to Evaluate Support (con't)

- **Removable Liners** - It is also preferable for the shoes to have removable liners to enable the liners to be modified, if required, and to allow for the use of orthoses.

How to Evaluate Fit

- **Measure Both Feet** - First of all, have both of your feet measured. The size of your feet can change throughout your life, so don't be surprised if you need a larger size than you did 20 years ago. The overall length of your feet is from your heel to your longest toe, which may not be your big toe.
- **Measured Size is an Estimate** - Keep in mind that a Brannock device, commonly used to measure feet, only gives an estimate of the size you should wear since every shoe company makes shoes which can fit slightly differently. Measuring gives knowledgeable shoe salespeople and consumers a guideline to help select appropriate shoes.
- **Different Foot Sizes** - If your feet are different sizes, buy the shoes to fit your larger foot. There are pads and insoles available that can help fill up the space around the smaller foot.
- **Match Foot & Shoe Shape** - For a shoe to fit properly, the shape of the shoe must match the shape of your foot. If your foot looks wide and square, you should wear shoes that have a wider toe-box and avoid pointed shoes. The widest part of your foot (across the ball of the foot) should be at the widest part of the shoe.
- **Toe Space** - There should be approximately 1/2" to 5/8" of space in the shoe beyond your longest toe to allow your feet to stretch comfortably within the shoe as you walk.

- **Forefoot Space (fit of the upper)** -When standing in the shoe, your shoe-fitter should be able to pinch approximately 1/4" of material between his thumb and forefinger from the widest area of the forefoot.
- **Throat Space** -Your shoe fitter should also be able to fit one finger under the throat of the shoe, which is at the base of the laces. If she cannot, the shoe is too shallow, and if she can fit 2 or 3 fingers under the throat of the shoe, then the shoe is too spacious.
- **Heel Space** - The shoes should be snug around the heels, but should not dig in.
- **Ankle Space** - Be sure that the collar or topline of the shoe around the ankle is not hitting the ankle bones.
- **Stretching** - Do not buy a pair of tight shoes expecting them to stretch, as this can be uncomfortable and can cut off your circulation, cause blisters or other wounds. If you buy an appropriately fitted shoe, stretching will not be necessary and you can avoid unnecessary pain and injury.
- **Shoes should bend where your foot bends.** Some people have long toes, others short toes. Check that the shoe bends at its widest point and that this region is also where the ball of your foot lies. If these two areas do not align you will place added stress on your shoe and foot causing increased wear and possible injury.

What Can Be Done About Heel Slippage?

- **Lacing** - If the shoe has laces, there are different lacing techniques that your Canadian Certified Pedorthist can show you to help secure your heel in the shoe.
- **Shoe Selection** - Some shoes are designed with a narrower heel and a wider forefoot which may improve the fit of the heel.
- **Pads & Fillers** - There are also various pads and fillers that can be used in the shoes to keep your heels in place. If one exists, padding the tongue of the shoe can help secure your foot in the heel area.

What Should People Who Wear Orthotics Look for in a Shoe?

- **Support & Fit** - If you wear orthoses or "orthotics", you also should wear supportive shoes that fit correctly when the orthosis is worn. The orthosis is only as good as the shoe it is placed into, so the benefits of orthoses will be greatly compromised in shoes that are lacking support or do not properly fit.
- **Removable Insole** - Removable insoles are desirable to provide the space needed to fit the orthosis in the shoe.
- **Motion Control** - Some shoes have motion control built into their design for people with specific foot mechanics. Orthoses can be worn with this type of shoe, however your Canadian Certified Pedorthist will want to analyze your walk to ensure that you are not being over-corrected. The orthosis must work with the shoes to give you the specific level of control you need.