

Footwear - helping you make the right choices

Right Shoe, Right Foot, Right Job

There is no right shoe or place to buy them. Get to know your feet and what works for you and the different activities you do.

Poorly fitting footwear can cause foot problems, for example:

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

Do your shoes fit your foot?

- Draw around your feet upon paper (compare both as they are often different shapes and sizes)
- Cut the shape out and see if they fit in shoes without crumpling the edges
- The paper template should fit neatly and easily
- Shoes are considered well fitted if you can move your toes freely without them being squashed.
- Feet do change over time, revisit your size and style periodically
- Shoes are made in different sole shapes ('called lasts'). 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?
- Shoes should be flexible to allow normal movement
- Avoid loose shoes. Accidents can be caused by insecure footwear.
- High heels alter your posture putting strain on your back, knees and ankles which can cause or aggravate foot deformities.
- 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.
- Shoes should be flexible to allow normal movement at the toes. Are they deep/high enough at the front to let your toes move, especially if you have bunions

Help in choosing footwear

A correctly fitted shoe allows the foot to function without any restriction on movement. This prevents 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.

- Shoes with a removable liner help with hygiene and room to add an insert/arch support (orthosis) if one is needed.
- Buy shoes at the end of the day as feet swell and become bigger.

- Your two feet may be differently sized. Fit to the largest.
- It is important that your footwear has a secure fastening such as laces, buckles or Velcro. These stabilise the foot and help to prevent trips and falls. They hold your foot in the shoe and prevent the foot sliding forward and cramping the toes. Shoes must feel comfortable when you try them on, breaking them in can harm your feet.
- Osteoarthritic ankle problems can be helped by wearing a shoe with a small elevated heel (less than 2cm) but if too high may irritate the knee. Knee problems may better respond to flexible soft shoes that mimic bare feet. It also makes sense to follow this style advice for hip and the back problems.

What should I avoid?

A “slip on”, court shoe or sandal/slider which is kept on the foot by curling the toes. Slip-on shoes are usually narrow, have to be wedged on to stay on the foot and this can damage the toes or cause corns and callus. 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. A shoe made of plastic, which will cause your foot to sweat. A thin, hard sole, will not cushion your foot adequately.

Wear the right shoe for the right job

Think about what shoes you wear most of the time, either at work or at home. Occasional shoes for dinners/weddings/golf/beach may not be a problem, if the time that you wear them is kept to a minimum.

Age does cause 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. Examples may include ladies’ low (fastened) wedge heels, walking shoes/trainers, brogues, running shoes or walking sandals.

Sometimes though, you just need to experiment with your current footwear to find your preferred option.

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.

Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments, please contact the Patient Experience Team - Tel: 0300 131 4500 Ext: 135860 or by email: esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net

Hand hygiene

The trust is committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is very important in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available at the patient bedside for staff use and at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering.

Other formats

If you require any of the Trust leaflets in alternative formats, such as large print or alternative languages, please contact the Equality and Human Rights Department.

Tel: 0300 131 4500 Email: esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

Reference

The following clinicians have been consulted and agreed this patient information:

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