

## FOOTWEAR GUIDE

Which shoes work best for you?



A guide for selecting proper footwear for your foot type.

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## Footwear Guide

**We're committed to your recovery**

Wearing the wrong shoes can lead to a variety of foot, knee and lower back problems.

Proper footwear selection is important to your overall health. Shoes play an integral role in supporting your entire body. It is critical that they provide both the proper cushioning and support to minimize wear and tear on your joints and reduce muscle strain.

When looking for shoes, check if the store has a Kinesiologist or Canadian Board Certified Pedorthist on staff. They specialize in fitting the proper footwear that work best for your feet. They also design custom foot orthotics if they have been prescribed.

If you suffer from bunions, other toe deformities, arthritis or diabetes, it is even more important that you visit our trained specialists to ensure you get the proper fit.

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## DETERMINING FOOT TYPE

Sit down on a chair with your feet resting on the floor. Look at the inside of your feet. Is your entire arch contacting the ground? Or is there a gap between your foot and the floor? How big is the gap? Now stand up. Look at your feet again. Has the position of your foot changed at all?

Most people begin with a moderate arch shape when they are sitting down, so that there is about a 1-2cm gap in height between the peak of the arch in their foot, and the floor. This is a normal foot position. When you stand up, the arch should collapse slightly down and inward (approx. 1/3 the distance).

This movement is called pronation. Pronation is a combination of events, which are naturally supposed to occur. It allows for cushioning and shock absorption to take place in your feet, preventing other joints of the body from injury.

## NEUTRAL

Neutral pronators have a normal amount of arch collapse when they stand up (approx. 1/3 the distance). They typically require a neutral shoe.



Neutral Shoe

## OVERPRONATORS

A large portion of the population have more than the required amount of foot collapse when they stand up (1/2 way or more). This excess collapse can contribute to various aches and pains throughout the feet, knees, and even up into the lower back. They typically require a stability or motion-control shoe to support their arch.



Stability Shoe



Motion-Control Shoe

## UNDERPRONATORS

Under-pronators are characterized by a high arch when they are sitting down, with very little or no collapse upon standing up. They typically require a neutral shoe.

**When shopping for shoes, follow these important guidelines regardless of your individual foot type:**

## RIGID HEEL CUP

The heel counter is the part of the upper shoe that wraps around the heel. Squeeze the two sides of the shoes together. The shoe should be fairly rigid and the two sides should not be able to touch. A shoe that squishes together will not provide enough control for your heel.



Rigid heel cups prevent both sides from touching

## STRONG SHANK

The shank is the part of the shoe that connects the heel area of the shoe to the toe of the shoe. Hold the shoe at the hindfoot with one hand, and at the forefoot with the other hand. Try to twist it out in opposite directions like a dish towel. The shoe should twist only slightly. A shoe that collapses and bends too far will also collapse around your foot!



Shoes with a strong shank twists only slightly

## PROPER FLEX POINT

The flex point of the shoe needs to be in the correct area. If not, serious foot injury can result. Shoes should flex at the ball of the foot, not in the middle.



Shoe flexes at the ball of the foot

## FUNCTIONAL FOREFOOT ROCKER

When looking for shoes for walking or running, look for ones with a good built-in forefoot rocker. Press down on the toe of the shoe. The heel should lift off the ground. The higher the lift, the better, as this aids the foot in propelling the body forward with a minimum amount of stress to the foot. Typically cross trainers do not possess a good forefoot rocker.



Forefoot rocker propels the body forward

## HOW CAN I TELL IF MY SHOES ARE WORN OUT?

1. Place your shoes side by side on a level surface so that you can look at them from the back. The back of the shoe should appear essentially vertical. If the heel counter is collapsing inwards or outwards, this means that not only is your shoe well worn, you may need to think about buying a new shoe with different support characteristics.

2. Look at the wear pattern on the bottom sole of the shoe. The normal wear pattern of a shoe should have more wear on the outside edge of the heel, transferring into the center of the midfoot and forefoot. The extent of the wear on the sole is another good indicator of when you should replace your shoes. If your shoes show more wear on the inner or outer borders of the sole, your replacement shoe may also require different support characteristics.

3. Take a look at the midsole of the shoe. Most shoes today are made of EVA, a rubber-like material that provides excellent cushioning. With wear, this material will begin to break down and no longer provide the maximum cushioning for your feet. Typically, wear in this area will be seen as wrinkles, or compression lines through the midsole.

## WHAT IF I WEAR ORTHOTICS?

If you wear orthotics, look for shoes that are strong in all of the qualities described above. Also look for shoes that are deep enough to allow both your feet and your orthotics to function comfortably. Having a removable liner in the shoes is essential for some types of orthotics. Ask your orthotic provider which types of shoes your orthotics work well with.

## WHAT IF I HAVE DIABETES?

- ▶ Avoid restrictive footwear, such as high heels with pointed toes or shoes that are too narrow.
- ▶ Avoid seams over the toe area of the shoes.
- ▶ If there is a problem with lower limb swelling, graduated compression stockings can help control swelling and maintain the fit of shoes over the course of a day.
- ▶ Have shoes fitted by a trained specialist such as a Canadian Certified Pedorthist.