

# Footwear

A guide to choosing the best shoes for your feet



[www.feetforlife.org](http://www.feetforlife.org)



The Society of  
Chiropodists and  
Podiatrists

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# Introduction

Feet have a rough time of it; they carry us the equivalent of five times around the earth in an average lifetime, yet we give them less attention than they deserve and we rarely wear the best shoes for our feet. This guide shows you what to look for when buying shoes, the best types of shoes for particular occasions and also a word about keeping your feet healthy throughout your lifetime.



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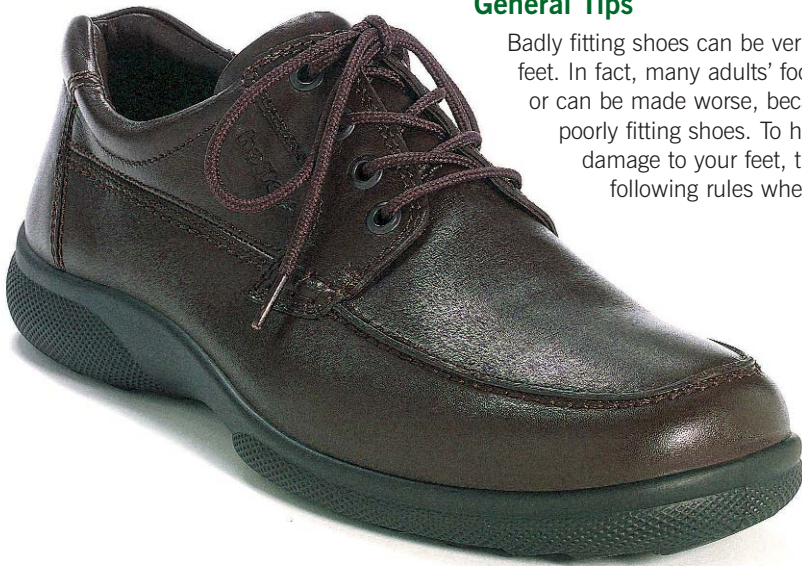
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## Quick Tips to Remember when Shoe Shopping

- Make sure you can wiggle your toes a little inside your shoes
- Try on both shoes and walk a few steps to see if they pinch or rub
- Choose leather uppers or materials that allow your feet to breathe and mould well to the shape of your foot
- Feet tend to swell a little during the day, so buy shoes in the afternoon when your feet are at their largest
- Visit a member of the Society of Shoe Fitters for a professional fitting service
- Buy the right shoe for the purpose – high heels are not for walking distances
- Buying shoes in a “Sale” may save money, but could cost your feet dearly. Ensure they fit correctly.

# Choosing the Best Shoes



## General Tips

Badly fitting shoes can be very damaging to feet. In fact, many adults' foot problems occur, or can be made worse, because they wear poorly fitting shoes. To help prevent damage to your feet, try to apply the following rules when you buy shoes.

## What Should you look for?

**Heel** – this should have a broad base, and should be no greater than 4cm (1½”)

**Heel Counter** – this reinforces the heel cup and stabilises the foot upon ground contact

**Sole** – should provide cushioning and protection for comfortable walking, and enough grip to prevent slipping

**Upper** – ideally made from natural materials such as leather or breathable fabrics to keep feet comfortable

**Linings** – breathable materials such as leather or fabric keep the foot fresh; they need to be smooth and seam-free

**Fastenings** – laces or straps with buckles or touch fastenings help to hold the foot securely within the shoe

**Toe Box** – sufficient depth to prevent rubbing and allow toes to wiggle

**Insole** – preferably removable to allow easy insertion of padding or orthoses

For further advice on choosing shoes please see: [www.feetforlife.org/foot\\_health/footwear.html](http://www.feetforlife.org/foot_health/footwear.html)

# Shoe Fitting Guide

For comfort and foot health, it's essential that your shoes fit your feet correctly. Comfortable shoes will allow your feet to work normally, and will not restrict their movement in any way. Whilst the size of the shoe you buy is important, it's also a good idea to check the following shoe fitting points to make sure that the shoe will be comfortable when you go walking:



- Make sure there's  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch (1cm) of space between your longest toe and the end of the shoe – this can easily be checked by pressing the upper to locate the position of your toes.
- Check there's enough room for your toes to wiggle in the shoe.
- There should be enough width in the shoe to accommodate your whole foot – there should be no pressure on the joints on the sides of your foot.
- For comfort, shoes shouldn't slip at the back. If the shoe slips when you walk, push your heel to the back of the shoe, then try altering the laces or straps to improve the fit against your foot.



## What Size do I Need?

Many people believe that their feet stay the same size throughout their lives. However, feet tend to increase in both length and width, so it's important to use the points above to check whether the fit is correct. Also, shoe sizing can vary tremendously between brands, so it's important to ensure shoes fit correctly, rather than relying on the size alone.

# Socks



Good socks will not only help keep your feet comfortable within your shoes, but will also keep them dry by drawing moisture away from the feet. 100% cotton socks can hold moisture against the skin, causing painful blistering. Wool and silk are often found blended with the latest generation of synthetic materials. If you find wool too warm or irritating, you could try an acrylic blended sock. Socks made with new materials such as CoolMax or DriMax are designed to wick sweat away from the skin keeping it fresh and dry. If you have problems with circulation or swelling, try to avoid socks with tight elastic

tops. There are wider soft-top socks available for such conditions.

Regularly check your sock drawer and discard outgrown or misshapen socks. Synthetic materials may shrink in a hot wash and the synthetic cottons become hard which can rub and cause abrasions. Always check toe seams for a knobby casting off knot - particularly for children's socks. If you have diabetes, there are now socks manufactured from one piece of material without a toe seam. Please see the back page to send for or download the Society's "Footcare for People with Diabetes leaflet".

# Shoes, Styles and Situations

## Children's Shoes

Having your child's shoes correctly fitted can help prevent problems occurring to their feet in later life. It's important to examine your child's bare feet on a regular basis for any redness or areas of irritation. Also, your child may not know or be able to explain that their shoes are too tight. If there is a problem, please check the fit of the shoes. In some cases, the problem may not be associated with the shoes, in which case contact your local Chiropodist/ Podiatrist - please see page 11.

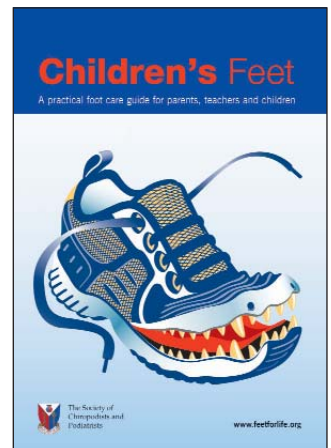
### How to Ensure Properly Fitting Shoes for Your Children

Purchase shoes from a children's shoe shop where a trained shoe fitter will measure your child's feet free-of-charge. The shoe fitter will advise you if your child needs new shoes and how much time they may have left in their

existing shoes and also give advice about growth, development and general foot health.

- To find a trained shoe fitter in your area, contact the Society of Shoe Fitters on 01953 851171 or email [info@shoefitters-uk.org](mailto:info@shoefitters-uk.org)
- Shoes should be fitted to leave about 18mm  $\frac{2}{3}$  inch growing room between the end of the longest toe and the end of the shoe
- Shoes must fit firmly at the heel, and should have a fastening to hold the foot securely
- Please see our general tips on buying shoes on page 3

The Society's leaflet "Children's Feet" contains lots of useful information about keeping your child's feet healthy (Please see the back page of this brochure).



## High Heels

Ask any woman...high heels are an essential part of the wardrobe – they make your legs look longer and your bottom smaller. But they can cause problems ranging from blisters, corns and calluses to serious foot, knee and back pain. Fear not, following the four “Gs” will help you to enjoy wearing high heels without damaging your feet. Enjoy your high heels, but only wear them for short periods of time, and only occasionally.



**Glamour** – Let high heels give you that extra “sparkle” and save wearing them only for glamorous, special occasions. Limit wearing them to around three to eight hours.

**Glide** – Don’t look like you’re rushing to catch a bus – slow down and take smaller steps. Put your heel down first and glide! Not only will this minimise damage to your feet, it will give you that sexy high-heel wiggle!

**Guide** – According to leading podiatrists, 90% of patients wear shoes that are too small, so make sure you check our shoe-fitting guide on page 4.

**Give** – Give your feet some extra-special attention after wearing high heels – enjoy a relaxing foot bath and a moisturising massage when you get home.

## Orthoses

Many people now wear corrective insoles or orthoses within their shoes. These may be simple pads or insoles that protect a tender joint or a sophisticated orthosis that corrects the way the foot functions.

In order for this treatment to succeed, the correct types of shoes must be worn. It is important to discuss shoes if you are thinking about using orthoses, as not every type of shoe is suitable. Podiatrists recommend that shoes should have:

- Depth at the toe and the heel
- Adjustable fastening
- No more than 4cm (1½”) heel height
- Removable insole to allow easy accommodation of the orthoses

Slip-on shoes or fashion shoes are generally less suitable to use with orthoses. As these shoes tend to have a shallow fitting, there may be problems fitting the device and the foot into the shoe at the same time. For advice on orthoses please contact your local Chiropodist/ Podiatrist - please see page 11.

## Shoes, Styles and Situations continued

### Out Walking

Feet are adaptable and can withstand a lot of pressure before they rebel. If you walk a lot, it's important to choose footwear that won't damage your feet. They should have lace-up fastenings to keep the feet firmly in place (the "seat belt" effect), which will help to prevent blisters and keep the toes from slipping forwards. This is especially important when you are walking downhill.

Leather uppers mould well to the shape of your foot, are hard wearing and allow your feet to "breathe" without becoming too sweaty. The lining of the shoe should be smooth, with no round and obtrusive stitching inside. The sole should be tough and long lasting to offer both protection and grip. More advice on walking can be found at [www.feetforlife.org](http://www.feetforlife.org)



### Shoes for Sporting Activities

Getting the right shoe really cuts down on the likelihood of suffering a sports related injury. Make sure that you buy a shoe that is designed for the activity you are doing:

**Running shoes** – are designed for just that – running! They are very flexible, which enables the foot to bend and flex through each step. It's best not to use these for sports such as tennis, basketball or aerobics, which involve sideways stepping; instead use one of the following.

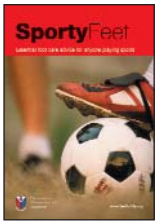
**Cross trainers** – are much stiffer and provide greater support for the foot when side-to-side movements are made, allowing them to be used across a range of activities.

**Sports shoes** – designed for tennis, basketball, etc. and give a combination of flexibility and sideways support.

**Fitness shoes** – are designed for aerobics, etc. They combine flexibility with support and



incorporate cushioning to lessen the effect of shock generated during high-impact work.



### Send for a Copy of the “Sporty Feet” Leaflet

Packed with lots of information about keeping your active feet healthy, you can obtain a copy in PDF form from [www.feetforlife.org](http://www.feetforlife.org) or call the Society on 0845 450 3720.

## Slippers

Many people wear slippers at home because they are easy to put on, and are soft and comfortable. However, well-worn slippers may not give much support to the foot, and the soles may have little cushioning. They may also lead to trips and falls around the house. When buying slippers, look for ones that have a cushioned sole, and ideally a fastening to hold them securely on the foot. Alternatively, try wearing a comfortable, well-fitting shoe reserved for indoor use instead.



## Work

In a normal working day, the working foot can easily travel several miles, and just standing still can also put a lot of strain on your feet. If you are on your feet a lot, you should wear well-fitting, comfortable shoes with cushioning and flexible soles.



If you work in heavy industry, wear safety shoes that bear the British Standard “kite mark”. If you work in wet conditions, you must wear waterproof footwear and socks which are thick enough to keep your feet warm, but not too tight that they affect your circulation.

# Foot Health



Proper foot care is essential to healthy, painless feet, and should be as much a part of your daily routine as brushing your teeth.

## Follow these Tips for Good Foot Health

- Wash your feet every day in warm, soapy water and dry thoroughly
- If your skin is dry, apply moisturising cream
- Trim your toenails regularly; try to cut straight across and not too short
- Keep your feet warm, and exercise to improve circulation
- Visit a Chiropodist/Podiatrist for advice – you can take your shoes with you for specific advice on footwear

## Blisters

Blisters are painful, fluid-filled lesions, often caused by friction and pressure. The following can cause them:

- Ill-fitting shoes
- Stiff shoes
- Wrinkled socks against the skin
- Excessive moisture
- Foot deformities

## How to Prevent Blisters

- Keep your feet dry
- Always wear socks as a cushion between your feet and shoes
- Wear properly fitting shoes

If a blister does occur, do not pop it. Cut a hole in a piece of foam or felt, forming a 'doughnut' over the blister; tape the foam or felt in place or cover with a soft gel-type dressing. Treat an open blister with mild soap and water; cover it

with an anti-septic ointment and protective soft gel dressing to prevent infection and speed up the healing process.

## Exercises to Keep Your Feet in Peak Condition

- Circle your feet ten times in each direction, keeping your legs as still as possible
- Consciously straighten your toes then wiggle them around
- Raise, point and curl your toes for five seconds each, repeated ten times – this is particularly good for toe cramps or hammer toes.



## If your feet hurt, something is wrong!

You can prevent foot problems before they occur by visiting a Chiropodist/Podiatrist near you for advice on how to keep your feet healthy.

# Podiatry



## What does a Podiatrist do?

The role of the Podiatrist (also known as a Chiropodist) is to prevent or correct deformity and maintain normal mobility and function. Podiatrists provide the basis for the ideal walking style and posture, and identify any medical or surgical condition that may require further referral and management. They also relieve pain, treat infections and skin, nail, soft tissue and connective tissue problems. This is done in conjunction with other members of the health care team. Podiatrists will also give expert advice on footwear, so it is a good idea to take a pair of shoes with you when you next see your Podiatrist.

## How to Contact a Podiatrist

To find a local podiatrist, you can either approach your GP practice for information on an NHS referral or if you decide to seek a private Podiatrist you could use the following link on the Society's web page <http://www.feetforlife.org/cgi-site/chiropodist.cgi>

Podiatrists and Chiropodists have to be registered with the Health Professionals Council, and so if you are seeing someone privately you can be confident in that practitioner's proficiency if they call themselves a Podiatrist or Chiropodist. To use these titles when not on the register is an offence.

## Become a Podiatrist

Working as a Podiatrist can be exciting and rewarding. It involves working in a variety of environments with a number of other health

care professionals and many different groups of patients who have a wide range of podiatric problems. The scope of practice of a Podiatrist is often much wider than many people realise. The work falls in to four key categories:

- General Clinics
- Biomechanics
- High Risk Patient Management
- Foot Surgery

Please visit [www.feetforlife.org](http://www.feetforlife.org) and click on the careers topic for full details of this rewarding career.

## Contributor Information

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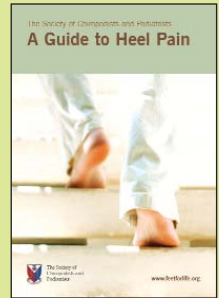
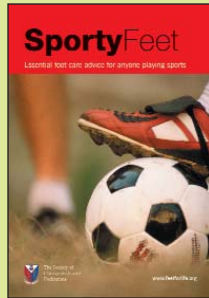
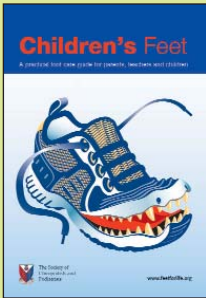
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# Further Foot Health Information

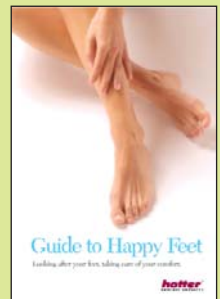


The Society of Chiropodists and Podiatrists provides a number of foot health information leaflets for you to either download in PDF form from the Society's website, [www.feetforlife.org](http://www.feetforlife.org), or to send for in hard copy from the address at the bottom of the page. Current leaflets include Children's Feet, Sporty Feet, Heel Pain and Footcare for People with Diabetes. More will be published soon.



Hotter Comfort Concept is delighted to support the educational work of the Society of Chiropodists and Podiatrists. Hotter shoes are designed with your complete comfort in mind. For further information on Hotter, or to request a catalogue, visit our website at [www.hotter.com](http://www.hotter.com) or call free on 0800 468837.

To order your copy of Hotter's Guide to Happy Feet, call free on 0800 468837 and quote reference CPT016



## Useful Contacts

[www.feetforlife.org](http://www.feetforlife.org)

[www.shoefitters-uk.org](http://www.shoefitters-uk.org)

[www.diabetes.org.uk](http://www.diabetes.org.uk)

[www.hotter.com](http://www.hotter.com)

[www.apma.org](http://www.apma.org) (US site)

[www.epodiatry.com](http://www.epodiatry.com)

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