A SIMPLE GUIDE TO REDUCING FOOT PAIN

FOOTWEAR AND FOOT SUPPORTS

Information for patients

1 FOOTWEAR

Well fitting shoes have an essential role in the treatment of foot problems. They are very important in keeping your feet in a good condition.

In some cases shoes that do not fit well or shoes that are unsuitable are the only cause of a foot problem.

You should never need to ‘break-in’ your shoes. If shoes are not immediately comfortable then they are not suitable. By ‘breaking-in’ shoes the feet are trying to mould to the shape of the shoes not the other way round.

A secure adjustable fastening – this is very important for holding your foot firmly within your shoe, it stops the heel lifting out of the shoe and stops the foot from sliding forward in the shoe.

Sole – try to find a shoe with a cushioned sole to help with shock absorption, but remember that the sole should not be so flexible that the shoe can be bent in half.

Shoe upper – should be made of breathable material, e.g. gortex or leather which adjusts to the shape of the foot. Avoid uppers with seams or ridges inside.

Condition – regularly check shoes to see if the inner lining has become torn or if the insole has ridged up, as things like this can cause friction areas on the feet. Regularly check the soles of your shoes for wear and tear to make sure they are not worn out or that they do not have a stone or something else stuck in them as this can cause friction areas.
A summary of common foot problems that are caused or aggravated by poor footwear

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem Description</th>
<th>Cause</th>
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<tr>
<td>Blisters</td>
<td>Movement of the foot within the shoe especially when the heel cup is not firm enough or is a poor fit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bunions which are rubbing the shoe and are red</td>
<td>Narrow or pointed shoes To box not rounded or deep enough</td>
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<tr>
<td>Calluses on the ball of the foot</td>
<td>High heels which throw your weight forward onto ball of the foot Loss of padding under foot joints due to clawing of the toes Thin non-cushioned sole</td>
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<tr>
<td>Corns and calluses on the ends/tops of toes or between the toes</td>
<td>Tight, constricting, shallow toe-box Too shallow, too high a heel, slip-on or court shoes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flat feet causing arch pain</td>
<td>Abnormal foot mechanics Aggravated by lack of support round the mid foot</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hammer toes/mallet toes/claw toes</td>
<td>Tight, constricting shallow toe-box Too narrow, short and/or too shallow</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heel callus</td>
<td>Slipping heel out of the back of the shoe Over-drying of the skin whilst wearing backless shoes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nerve inflammation (usually between the joints in the ball of the foot)</td>
<td>Shoes too tight causing squeezing of the foot</td>
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2 BASICS OF A GOOD SHOE FIT

Length – there should be half an inch (1cm) between the end of your longest toes and the inside front edge of the shoe. If the shoe is too short the toes will be cramped.

Width – your foot should not feel tight in the shoe, or bulge out over the sides of the sole. Try comparing the sole of the shoe against the sole of your foot. The front of the shoe should be rounded and foot shaped, not pointed.

Depth – this is often overlooked but it is very easy for shoes to cause problems when the toe-box (the front of the shoe where your toes are) is not deep enough. A toe-box which is not deep enough causes pressure on the tops of the toes, especially if toes are clawed.

Heel – ideally the heel should be no higher than one inch (2.5cm) and with a wide base. A higher heel will cause many foot problems, especially cramping of the toes. Walking in shoes with a high heel alters the posture and may lead to back, hip or knee pain. The shoe should also have a firm heel cup to help support your ankle. If a shoe slips at the heel then it is not a good fit; a ‘deep’ shoe instead of a ‘wide’ shoe results in a wide front fit and a narrow ankle fit.
3 TIPS FOR FINDING A WELL FITTING SHOE

Feet change in size depending on the time of day. Try to buy shoes in the afternoon when your feet may be more swollen and are probably tired.

Check the insides of the shoes for seams or edges that may irritate by feeling the inside of the shoe with your hand it should be smooth where your toes will be

Ask the shop assistant to check the fit

Walk around the shop wearing the new shoes as your feet get slightly longer when walking and wriggle your toes a little as it should be comfortable to do so

Make sure that the shoes you are wearing are suitable for the intended task. You may need to wear different shoes at different times of the day.

If you use insoles (orthotics) take these with you and try the shoes on with them inside.

If you have foot or toe deformities and have difficulty buying shoes for advice contact the Independent Footwear Retailers Association on 020 8994 6259 or ifra@netcombuk.co.uk or look at Footwear Economic Facts of Life at www.britfoot.com

4 INSOLES

What is a foot support?

An insole is a foot support that fits in the shoe providing a general support for the foot. It can be soft and flat and cushions the foot, or harder which provides more support and control of foot movement.

Why would it be needed?

An insole is needed to help a painful foot. It can provide cushioning and help correct the way the foot works during walking.

Where can I get them?

There are lots of different insoles available from chemists, sports shops, supermarkets and shoe shops.

What do I need to look for?

Insoles can be cut to fit the shoe. Soft cushioning supportive insoles tend to be firmer and are available in three quarters or full length and come in pairs. When wearing insoles it feels different and can take a few days to get used to them. Wearing them too much at the start can cause your muscles to ache as they work in a different way.