

## Top Ten Tips for Fitting Shoes

Even for the most of informed customers, buying shoes can be a daunting task due to all the technical jargon. With the help of the following tips and the guidance of a knowledgeable footwear expert, buying the appropriate footwear can be both fun and easy.

**1. Shoe sizes are not standard:** Shoe sizes will vary according to the brand and the style. Do not buy a shoe according to the number associated with the size; go with how the shoe feels.

**2. Both feet may not be the same size or shape:** It is necessary that the bigger or most “troublesome” foot is fitted first — sacrifices may have to be made.

**3. Wear the same socks that you will normally wear with the shoes**

**4. Be fit for the shoe late in the day or after physical activity:** Be fit for the shoe later in the day — your foot expands later in the day after bearing weight. Further, prolonged physical activity may cause your feet to swell slightly.

**5. Select shoes that match the shape of your foot:** Everybody has a different and sometimes unique shape to their feet (e.g., wide forefoot, narrow heel) and needs to be fitted accordingly.

**6. Shoes should be slightly longer and wider than your feet. Further, the balls (i.e., front) of your feet should fit comfortably in the shoe:** Do not assume the shoe will “stretch” to fit your feet. Ideally, you should feel like you could “play the piano” with your toes inside the shoe.

**7. Shoes should fit comfortably in the heel:** The upper of the shoe should not rub on the ankle bones and the heel should not excessively move inside the shoe.

**8. Bring orthotics/inserts when you try on shoes:** The orthotic/insert may change the fit and/or function of the shoe.

**9. Compare a variety (e.g., 2 or 3 different pairs) of shoes and test them out in the store**

**10. Choose shoes appropriate for the activity:** E.g., Aerobics shoes are generally not good for running on the road.

## Characteristics of athletic shoes

Your foot is a complex structure. It contains 26 bones (both feet accounting for almost 1/4 of all the bones in your body), **more than 30 small joints, and numerous muscles, ligaments, nerves and blood vessels.**

Essentially there are three very basic foot types. These include the low arch (i.e., over-pronated), high arch (i.e., under-pronated), and the “normal” foot. Pronation is generally a problem of hyper-mobility, while supinated feet are usually very rigid.

**There are numerous types of shoes each designed to support the foot and minimize stress during various activities.** This is because the forces and motions that occur during different sports and activities vary significantly. Types of shoes include running, walking, casual, aerobic, hiking, cross-training, and numerous others — each of which should be chosen according to the activity or activities that a person wishes to use them for.

It is **essential that these shoes are fitted according to each individual’s needs**, because improperly fitted shoes may result in mechanical disturbances. This can affect the body’s total postural balance and may eventually lead to unnatural stress on the connective tissues, muscles, and joints.

## Footwear for Specific Needs

### Arthritis

A rheumatic disease that affects synovial joints. Arthritis always involves damage to the articular (i.e., joint) cartilages, but the specific causes may vary. The diseases of arthritis are usually considered as either degenerative or inflammatory in nature; **the two most common types found in the feet are osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis**, respectively.

**Recommendations:** In general, a supportive, cushioned shoe that protects your feet against injuries and keeps them warm, dry, and comfortable is advisable. Leather uppers may be more comfortable if you are having a lot of foot problems. Soles should be light, hard-wearing, and flexible. The sole should be able to bend along an imaginary line drawn from the base of the big toe to the base of the little toe. If a bunion forms, choosing shoes that have enough room in the toe box with a soft upper will reduce pressure and rubbing on the bunion joint. If you have arthritis in your hands, lace-up shoes may be difficult to fasten properly. Elastic laces may be much easier; they only need to be tied once and can ensure a snug fit.

### Diabetes

Can be due to a deficiency of insulin or to a decreased responsiveness to insulin — both resulting in elevated blood sugar levels (hyperglycemia). **People with diabetes are more likely to have problems with their feet for two main reasons.** First, diabetics typically have poor circulation or ischemia (inadequate blood supply to a region of the body) in the

legs and feet. Secondly, nerve damage in the feet leading to neuropathy may also be present.

**Recommendations:** Perhaps most importantly, people with a loss of sensation in their feet should avoid walking barefoot to prevent cuts, sores and possible infection. In other words, shoes or slippers should be worn at all times. Make sure the shoes do not have any ridges, sharp points, or any potentially harmful pressure points. Additionally, check shoes and socks for any foreign objects on a daily basis. Shoes should be well cushioned, with ample room in the toes. Ideally, they should be slightly longer than your longest toe when standing, so that you can wiggle all of your toes in your shoes.

### **Pregnancy**

Pregnancy triggers many different changes in a woman's body, including the feet. Two of the most common foot problems experienced by women during pregnancy are over-pronation and edema.

**Recommendations:** Over-pronation may be treated with the appropriate shoe. These shoes should be designed with appropriate arch support and medial rear-foot posting. Further, a shoe with a wide base of support (i.e., more stable) and shock absorbing properties is also advisable. Edema may be reduced by a number of conservative measures. Perhaps most importantly, wear proper fitting footwear — footwear that is too narrow or short will constrict circulation. Further, have your feet measured several times throughout your pregnancy as they will most likely change sizes.

### **Parkinson's disease**

Clinically, Parkinson's disease is characterized by a reduced amount of movement (akinesia), slow movements (bradykinesia), muscular rigidity, and a tremor at rest. Other motor and non-motor abnormalities may also be present.

**Recommendations:** Putting on and taking off shoes can be tiring and time-consuming for some with Parkinson's disease; particularly those with a reduction of fine motor skills. Velcro closings, or even slip-on shoes are generally easier than lace ups; and elastic laces (laces that you only need to tie up once) may be a viable alternative. Further, for those who have poor balance, a shoe with a wider base of support is also recommended.