

Choosing a Walking Shoe

As gentle as walking is, your feet and legs will absorb a blow equivalent to twice your body weight with every step. Careful attention to shoe selection is important to maximize comfort and minimize potential for injury.

The Right Fit

Part of finding the right athletic shoe is learning your foot type. Most fall into three main categories: normal, flatfoot, or high arches. This wet test will tell you which type you have and help you choose the right shoe. To do the test, wet your feet, then stand on any surface that will leave a mark. Look at the imprint.

A. **NORMAL FOOT:** Your toe bed and heel are connected by a wide band, and there's a space where your arch curves off the sole. Best shoes: Those made for cushioning and stability, with moderate control.

B. **FLATFOOT:** Your entire sole, including the arch, leaves an imprint. Because you have a low, flexible arch, your foot rolls inward too much. This can put the knee and hip out of alignment. Best shoes: Motion-control.

C. **HIGH ARCH:** The imprint shows your forefoot and heel are connected by a very thin band. High-arched feet do not pronate (turn inward during motion) well and aren't as efficient at absorbing shock. Best shoes: Cushioned with flexibility.

When Selecting a shoe

- Make sure your shoes are $\frac{1}{2}$ inch longer than your longest toe, so toes are not crowded.
The toe box should be roomy, but not so spacious that feet slide or blisters form.
- Fit shoes snugly in the heel.
- Choose a shoe with uppers made of material that breathes easily.
- Shop for shoes later in the day after walking. Exercise makes your feet swell slightly and changes the fit.
- Look at your old shoes to see where the "wear" is: Ball of the foot? Side? Heel?

Old Shoes Tell a Lot

- If your shoes are badly worn on the outside edge of the heel, you need good heel cushioning because your heel takes a lot of pounding.
- If you see wear on the lateral side of the sole of your shoe, or if the portion of your shoe that cradles your heel is rolling, you need a shoe with more stability.
- If you notice wear only under the forefoot, you're striking with the ball of your feet and need a lot of cushioning in the forefoot.
- If your foot buds over the side of your shoe, you need a wider shoe.
- If you have toe marks inside your shoe or your toenails become thick, you need more room in the toe area.

