



## Wearing the Right Shoes for Walking

Confused when choosing shoes? Find the right ones in your budget with these tips.

**Know what you need-** It's possible to spend anywhere from \$19.99 for no-name brands to more than \$170 for name brands sporting the latest technological wonder. A high price doesn't always guarantee the right fit or features. Look for shoes that provide excellent support, cushioning and fit in the middle price range.

Walking shoes should be lightweight and breathable. The cushioning should be thickest in the heel and the shoe should be flexible enough to bend in your hands.

Running shoes provide even more cushioning and flexibility, so they're also an option for walking. But the thicker treads could cause you to trip on carpet. Multi-purpose shoes like cross trainers are a good alternative if you want to combine several activities like walking, tennis and weight training in one workout.

Look for a specialty athletic shoe store with a good reputation and a knowledgeable staff. Know your foot type. People with high-arched feet tend to require greater shock absorption than those with average feet. High-arched (cavus) feet also suffer from lateral instability and are more prone to ankle sprains, while low-arched ("flat") feet require shoes with less cushioning but greater support and heel control.

**Get the right fit-** Getting a good fit is critical. Remember, no matter how popular a shoe is or how good it may look, it won't do you any good if it doesn't support your unique foot or causes blisters. Grab the shoe at the ball and heel. Bend the shoe from front to back. The shoe should bend right near the ball of the foot, your foot's natural hinge point. Then find the "heel counter," a stiff cup sewn into the back of the shoe to provide heel support. Squeeze this cup into the shoe. It should be very stiff and not collapse inward easily.

### Here are some more tips:

- Get fitted for footwear at the end of the day, when your foot size is at its maximum. It's not unusual for a foot to increase half a shoe size in a day.
- Allow 1/2 inch (or the width of your index finger) between the end of your longest toe and the end of the shoe. If one foot is larger than the other, buy the larger size.
- The ball of your foot should match the widest part of the shoe and you should have plenty of room for your toes to wiggle without experiencing slippage in the heel. (Hint: Women tend to have a narrower heel than men, so try on several models to find the right style.)
- Wear the same weight of socks you intend to use during activity. Socks with a high cotton content retain moisture and cause blisters more easily. Look for socks that are made with synthetic fibers such as acrylic, polyester or Coolmax®.

Athletic shoes no longer require a break-in period, but they'll lose their cushioning after three to six months of regular use (or 350-500 miles of walking or running). It's important to replace your shoes regularly. If they're no longer absorbing the pounding and jarring action of the sport, you're more likely to sustain knee and ankle injuries.

Finally, just because a friend says that certain shoes are great doesn't mean they're right for you. Try out several pairs and simulate your activity on a hard surface to see what kind of support and cushioning you get. Then you and your feet will be ready to go!