Footwear

This leaflet is intended to provide simple, practical information about choosing suitable shoes to keep your feet comfortable.

The human foot consists of 26 bones, which do not fully set until we are around 18 years old; therefore, the shoes we wear as children are vital to our future foot health.

However, we can still do enormous damage to our adult feet by wearing the wrong shoes. Choosing the right shoes is important for everyone, but especially so if you suffer from foot problems or conditions such as Inflammatory Arthritis or Diabetes.

Many minor foot ailments can be relieved with a properly fitted and carefully selected shoe.

You may need to see a Podiatrist (Health and Care Professions Council Registered) for treatment or for advice about suitable footwear.

What is a good shoe?

The shoe should be the correct length, width and depth for your foot. There should be 1 cm (about 0.5 inch) between the end of your longest toe and the end of your shoe.

The upper should be soft with no hard seams or ridges and be made from a natural fibre such as leather or fabric, which allows moisture to evaporate.

The shoe needs to hold your foot firmly in place with an adjustable fastening, i.e. laces, straps with buckles, or Velcro.

The toe box should be round and deep to give the toes room to move.

The heel should be less than 4cm (1.5 inches) high, broad, and stable.

The shoe needs a firm heel counter (back of the shoe) that fits snugly around the back of the heel. This helps to stabilise your heel as the shoe makes contact with the ground. It should also have some cushioning for comfort and to reduce rubbing.

Ideally, the shoe will have a thick, lightweight, cushioning sole of a non-slip material. The sole should not be too flexible (bendy).

What is a bad shoe?

Slip-on shoes - such as ballet pumps, court shoes and moccasins - have to fit too tightly to the foot to stay on, and this can damage the toes or cause corns and callus. The problem is the same even if the shoes are ‘wide fitting’.

A pointed toe box will squash your toes together and can cause bony deformity, corns and ulcers.

A heel that is too high will cause the foot to be pushed to the end of the shoe, crushing the toes, and putting pressure on the ball of your foot.

A shoe made of plastic will cause your foot to sweat, which can cause fungal infections and blisters.

A thin sole will not cushion your foot comfortably.

Insoles or In-Shoe Orthoses

If you need to wear insoles to help with any foot problems, you will need to ensure that your shoes allow enough room for your insoles without crushing or rubbing your toes or your heel slipping out of the shoe.

It is helpful to look for a shoe with a removable liner, which can be replaced with your prescribed insole.

Buying shoes

Shop at a store with trained staff to advise you. Have your feet measured – both length and width.

When trying on shoes, always wear the socks or stockings you will wear most often with them and also try them with any inserts or insoles you need to wear.

Always try on both shoes and fit your longest foot. Remember, your big toe is not always the longest! If your feet tend to swell, shop for shoes later in the day.

Your shoes should fit properly from new. They should not need ‘breaking in’.

Expensive shoes that fit badly may cause foot problems. Remember that price does not always determine a good fit.

If you normally wear slippers most of the time, it is important that these also fit well and protect your feet. Use these guidelines to choose your slippers as well as your shoes.

A guide to help you when buying a pair of shoes

Using a piece of paper or thin cardboard, get somebody to draw around your foot whilst standing. Take a pair of scissors and carefully cut out the shape of your foot.

Place this cut-out shape into your shoe. If the edges curl, then your shoe is probably not fitting correctly.

Take this cutout with you as a useful guide when buying shoes.

Podiatry Service Bedfordshire

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Confidentiality

We will not share any information that you give us without discussing this with you first and getting your consent. The only exception to this is if we consider that your life or the wellbeing of someone else could be at risk

Compliments, Comments and Complaints

We welcome feedback about our services, so please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service on freephone 0800 7834839 or email: elft.palsandcomplaints@nhs.net

If you are not happy with the service and your treatment, please ask to speak to the service manager to try and resolve this. Or contact the PALS team.

If you wish to make a complaint, you can call
Freephone: 0800 085 8354
or email: elft.complaints@nhs.net
or write to:
FREEPOST RTXT-HJLG-XEBE
Complaints Department,
The Green,
1 Roger Dowley Court.
Russia Lane,
London E2 9NJ

Bedfordshire adult and children's community health services are provided in partnership by East London NHS Foundation Trust (ELFT) and Cambridgeshire Community Services (CCS) NHS Trust.

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PATIENT INFORMATION

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Information and Advice Leaflet

Podiatry Services in Bedfordshire