



## ***Understanding Your Feet and What Shoes to Wear***

Feet are one of the most-used parts of the body and wearing the right shoe is important to prevent injury and lessen pain. However, finding the right shoes for a sport and exercise activity can be overwhelming. Follow our tips to understand your foot type and invest in the right shoes.



Whether you are going to the gym regularly, you're an avid runner, you're competing in sports or you're simply walking around the office, shoes are important and play a role in your daily comfort level.

According to Dr. David Myer, an OrthoIndy foot and ankle specialist, shoes can help prevent foot and ankle damage and make your workout more productive and enjoyable.

"Choosing the right shoe for your feet type and activity will help protect you against common injuries and can lessen the impact of your step," said Dr. Myer. "Sport or exercise-specific shoes can also improve your performance by offering more support to your feet and ankles."

The wrong shoes can contribute to common sports injuries such as shin splints, Achilles tendinitis, corns and bunions, ingrown nails, plantar fasciitis or even lower back pain. Such injuries may significantly limit or stop your day-to-day activities.



## How do I find the right shoes for my feet?

“In general, the right shoe should cushion and support your feet, feel comfortable and fit well,” said Dr. Myer. “If you often feel heel pain, look for shoes that have extra support or cushion in the heel. If the ball of your foot gets sore often, find a shoe that offers support for the ball of the foot.”

Dr. Myer suggests getting familiar with your type of foot and how you walk. Then find shoes that match your unique foot style.



## How do I know what type of foot arch I have?

Take a look at the bottom of a shoe you wear often or during exercise activity. The wear on your shoe will likely reveal your foot type.

- If your shoe shows even wear, you have a neutral arch and are a normal pronator.
- If the inner soles of your shoes are usually worn down, you are an overpronator and probably have a low or flat arch.
- If your shoe wear shows excessive wear on the outer soles, you are an under pronator and probably have a high arch.



Normal Pronator



Over Pronator



Under Pronator

## What are the 3 arches of the foot?

There are three different foot types: Neutral arch, low arch and high arch. The height of your arch affects the direction and severity of the way your foot rolls or pronates.

1. **Neutral arch** typically causes the foot to roll to a healthy spot.
2. **Low arch** typically causes the foot to roll excessively inward, or overpronate.
3. **High arch** typically causes the foot to roll in only slightly at impact, or under pronate.



Neutral



Low



High



## What kind of shoes are best for your feet?

Once you know your foot type, you can find the right shoe. Shoes are generally placed into three categories, which are not always labeled on the shoe or box. Don't be afraid to ask a salesperson or research online prior to making a purchase.

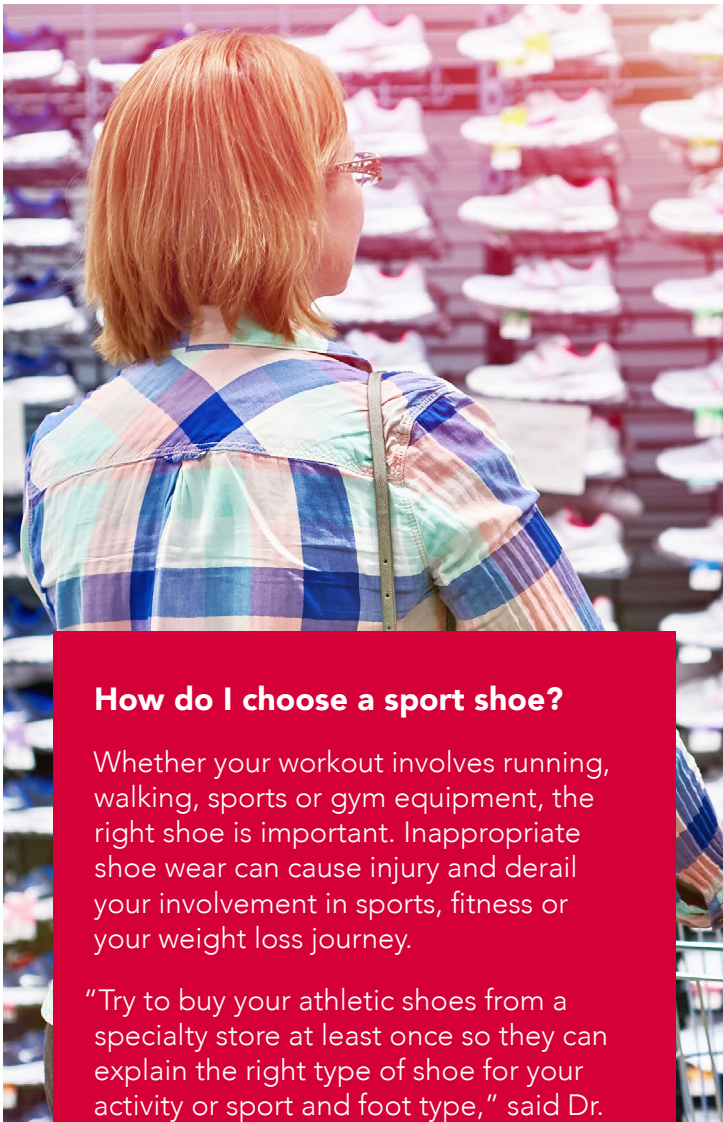
1. **Stability Shoes:** Best for people with normal arches and only mild control problems. The extra stability these shoes offer comes from extra arch-side supports and high-density foam. Stability shoes are typically built with a gentle arch from front to back that provides rear-foot stability and forefoot flexibility.
2. **Motion Control Shoe:** Best for flat-footed people who tend to overpronate. These shoes typically have rigid devices made out of plastic, fiberglass or high-density foam. The arch area on motion control shoes is filled in for increased stability, which is why there is a different color at the midsole. The extra rigidity in these shoes prevents the heel from turning out and the foot from overpronating.
3. **Cushioning Shoes:** Best for those with high arches and rigid feet who tend to under pronate. This highly flexible shoe is built on a curve and made of lightweight materials that provide minimal rigidity with optimal cushioning.

## How do you know if a shoe fits properly?

- Make sure you have at least 1 to 1.5 cm from where your toe stops and the end of the shoe.
- A shoe should feel snug but not tight.
- A shoe should feel comfortable right away; contrary to popular belief, shoes shouldn't need 'broken in' to feel comfortable.
- You should still be able to wiggle your toes.
- Make sure your shoe grips your heel; a heel should not slip out of the shoe when you move.

## What should I look for when buying shoes?

1. Shop for shoes after exercise or at the end of the day when your feet are at their largest.
2. Try on shoes wearing the same type of sock or equipment you would normally wear with the shoe.
3. Walk or even run a little bit in the shoes to make sure they are comfortable to move around in.
4. If you are a woman with wide feet, some men's shoes may fit you better as they are typically wider.
5. If a shoe feels tight, sometimes a size up won't help so always try the shoe on before making the purchase.
6. Depending on your foot problems, ensure that the shoe addresses those needs. This could include a well cushioned heel if you suffer from heel pain or plantar fasciitis, or try soft upper materials in the toe box to avoid pressure on hammer-toes.
7. Most importantly, the best advice often is the shoe that is the most comfortable for you is the best shoe for you.



### How do I choose a sport shoe?

Whether your workout involves running, walking, sports or gym equipment, the right shoe is important. Inappropriate shoe wear can cause injury and derail your involvement in sports, fitness or your weight loss journey.

“Try to buy your athletic shoes from a specialty store at least once so they can explain the right type of shoe for your activity or sport and foot type,” said Dr. Myer. “Sometimes sport shoes require a larger size than you normally wear, and they can help determine what will work best for you.”

The correct sport shoe will help prevent foot and ankle damage and can improve your overall performance.

### When should I get new gym shoes?

Worn out shoes do not provide your feet the protection they need while you are working out or participating in sports. “Running shoes should be replaced every 350 to 500 miles. If you run around 20 miles a week, you should replace your shoes every five to six months,” said Dr. Myer.

You can also determine when to replace your shoes based on the tread on the bottom of the shoe. If it starts to look worn and isn’t doing its job, it’s time for a new pair.



### What shoe should I wear?

Deciding what type of shoe to wear, depends on your activity or sport.



#### Walking Shoes

- Cushion for shock absorption
- Flexible soles
- Smooth tread
- Light in weight

#### Running Shoes

- Allow for flexibility
- Significant cushioning to handle impact
- Light in weight
- Stability in the heel
- Medium tread



#### Hiking Shoes

- Additional room within the shoe for thick socks
- Strong ankle support
- Thick soles to cushion feet
- Rough tread

#### Shoes for Field Sports

*(baseball, lacrosse, golf, football and soccer)*

- Traction or cleats to permit movement
- Light in weight



#### Shoes for Court Sports

*(volleyball and basketball)*

- Ankle support
- Thick soles
- Smooth tread



## How do I choose a work shoe?

“Choosing shoes for everyday wear depends on your type of job,” said Dr. Myer. “If you are on your feet most of the day, you want a shoe that offers both cushion and support. If you are using heavy machinery or at risk of dropping something on your foot, you need a work boot or steel toed shoe. If you are sitting at a desk all day, you might not have as many restrictions when it comes to choosing a shoe.”



## What shoes should I wear for an office job?

If you aren't on your feet all day, any type of shoe will be fine if you are comfortable in them. However, if your office job requires you to be on your feet all day or you are traveling a lot for work, a shoe with comfort and support is necessary.

“If you walk a lot between meetings or you travel quite a bit, wear comfortable shoes whenever possible and change into business appropriate shoes when you need to,” said Dr. Myer. “Keep a pair of comfortable shoes under your desk, in your car or in your work bag to quickly change when you have a chance.”

## How do I choose the right work boot?

Look for boots that offer foot and ankle support as well as cushion for the bottom of your foot. Some jobs require toe protection so look for a pair of steel toe boots. If you need extra support, look for heel pads or shoe inserts that offer more comfort to the soles of your feet.

“The most important thing to look for when buying a new pair of work boots is comfort,” said Dr. Myer. “If you are going to be wearing them for the majority of everyday, make sure you can move comfortably in them.”

## What about high-heels, flats, wedges and flip-flops?

“Many people ask me about how bad high-heels are for your feet or if it’s okay to wear flip-flops or flats,” said Dr. Myer. “However, it’s all relative and depends on the activity and the period of time you plan to wear those types of shoes.”

### High-heels and Wedges

According to Dr. Myer, if you wear high-heels every day to work and you are on your feet quite a bit, you might start to develop foot and ankle pain related to metatarsalgia (pain under the ball of the foot), bunions or hammertoes, just to name a few.

However, if you listen to your body and stop wearing the heels when you’re in pain, you should be able to alleviate this.

A wedge is better than the more stylish drop-off type of heels because a thicker and more stable heel is better and open-toed high-heels are better than closed-toed. If you have to wear a closed-toed shoe, get one that fits you snugly so that your foot doesn’t slide into the toe box. Lastly, any type of cushioning underneath the forefoot would help.

***Learn How to Choose the Right High-heel***

### Flip-flops and Flats

The same goes for flip-flops or flats. If you are going to be doing a lot of walking or your job requires you to move fast, those types of shoes aren’t the best options because they don’t offer any support or cushion.

However, for quick trips to the beach, to dinner or to a desk job, there is nothing wrong with throwing on a pair of sandals. Some arch support in the flip-flop is better than none. More cushioning is also better than less. Flip-flops with more than one strap to hold the shoe on are more stable to prevent blistering and shear forces on the foot. Accurate sizing is critical.

***Learn More About When You Should and Shouldn’t Wear Flip-flops***







With years of experience and the most advanced technology, OrthoIndy foot and ankle specialists will give you or your child the best chance possible to get back to an active lifestyle. **Make an appointment** or visit one of our urgent care clinics and let OrthoIndy's team of experts help you get normal back, whatever your normal looks like.



To help you better understand what you or your child's pain means, what might be causing it and how you can prevent future injuries view our **Ultimate Guide to Foot and Ankle Injuries**.

