Oxford Health
NHS Foundation Trust

Podiatry

Footwear advice

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Footwear

This leaflet gives you advice about wearing the most appropriate shoes, taking account of the shape of your feet and your medical condition. Footwear which does not fit properly is one of the most common causes of foot problems.

Buying new shoes

- ☑ Get your feet measured.
- ☑ Always try on both shoes.

When buying new shoes, always try on both shoes. Most people's feet are slightly different sizes.

- ☑ Buy your own shoes.

If possible, you should go to the shoe shop yourself so you can get your feet measured and shoes fitted properly.

- ☑ Wear new shoes around the house for short periods to start with.

Look for problems such as redness caused by rubbing or pressure. If this happens, you can usually return shoes to the shop, but only if you have not worn them outside.

- ❗ If you are not sure if your new shoes are suitable, ask your podiatrist for advice before you wear them.

What shoes should you wear?

- The shoe should be the correct length, width and depth for your foot. There should be 1 cm 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 where possible, made from a natural material such as soft leather which will fit to your foot without any rubbing and allows moisture to evaporate. Or a breathable synthetic material which many walking shoes and sports shoes are made from.
- The shoe needs to hold your foot firmly in place with an adjustable fastening, i.e. laces, straps, buckles or velcro. This will help prevent rubbing.
- The front of the shoe should be round and deep to give the toes room to move.
- The back of the shoe needs to be firm and fit snugly around the back of the heel. This helps to maintain and stabilise the heel in place as the shoe makes contact with the ground.
- The heel of your footwear should be less than 2.5 centimetres (1 inch), broad and stable.

What is an unsuitable shoe?

• A “slip on” or court shoe which is kept on the foot by curling the toes, this can damage the toes and cause corns and callus.

• A pointed toe box, which will squash your toes together and can cause changes to the shape of your bones or joints.

• A heel that is too high and will cause the foot to be pushed to the end of the shoe, crushing the toes.

• A shoe made of plastic or rubber, which is not breathable and will cause your foot to sweat and may cause blisters.

• A thin, hard sole, which will not cushion your foot comfortably.

• Very soft flexible shoes which offer no support to the foot.

Wear and tear

Check your shoes for signs of wear such as rough edges in seams or linings and worn soles and heels.

Always check your shoes are in good condition and replace them whenever there are signs of wear and tear that can’t be repaired.

Prescription shoes

If you have been supplied with shoes, they will have been made to a prescription. You should follow the instructions your orthotist (the person who designed or prescribed your shoes) or podiatrist gives you.

At first you should wear the shoes for short periods around your home, checking for any problems such as redness caused by rubbing or pressure. If this occurs, you should contact your podiatrist or orthotist immediately.

When you and the person who prescribed your shoes are happy with the comfort and fit of the shoes, these should be the only shoes you wear.

- It is important that you wear these shoes inside and outside the house.

Shoes will normally be prescribed with insoles. These are an important part of your footwear and you should only remove them if your podiatrist or orthotist advises you to.

- It is important that you check the inside of your shoes every day to make sure no small objects have fallen in, and that there is no damage to the insole or lining.

If you notice any wear or damage to the shoes, you should contact your orthotist so that they can be repaired.

Socks, stockings and tights

- You should always change your socks, stockings or tights every day.
- They should not have bulky seams and they should not have elasticated tops.
- All your socks, stockings and tights should be the right size for your feet.
- Remember: if you are not sure about any shoes, socks, stockings or tights you are wearing, or new shoes you have bought, your podiatrist will be happy to advise you.

Individual advice

Accessibility

Patient information leaflets are available on our website:
www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/leaflets

Get in touch

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Feedback

Our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) provides advice and support to patients, families, and carers, helping to resolve any problems, concerns, or complaints you may have.

Phone	0800 328 7971
Email	PALS@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk

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