



PROPER FOOTWEAR

Kids wear shoes every day!

To avoid problems with foot pain, back pain, and general leg pain, children should use footwear that promotes healthy foot alignment. Many adult foot problems can have their origin in childhood. Young children's (16-36 months) shoe size can change 1/2 a size every 2-4 months. After age 3, growth of 1/2 a size every 4-6 months is average.

It is also important that children use appropriate footwear for their own safety and comfort and to reduce or prevent short-term and long-term orthopedic problems or injuries. Wearing supportive footwear can also assist in the development of motor skills. Children should wear appropriate footwear to school to support them in school related activities such as physical education, recess and field trips. Wearing proper footwear during recess will allow children to climb playground equipment and safely navigate playground surfaces. A soft pliable sneaker is usually the best choice for most ages.

Considerations when buying new footwear:

The most important factor is fit. Have your child's foot measured every 3 months and never buy shoes for your child to "grow into"

- Have your child's feet measured, while standing, every time you buy shoes. Make sure the shoe chosen fits the larger foot if your child's feet are sized differently.
- The insole should match the arch of your foot.
- The sole should cushion your foot and should bend at the forefoot or "ball of the foot" not the mid foot.
- The heel should be constructed from a foam material for shock absorption and should be straight not curved.
- Children should have plenty of room to wiggle their toes in the toe box. There should be a thumb's width from the end of the big toe to the end of the shoe. Look for rounded toe boxes.
- The shoe should conform to your child's feet. If the shoes are not comfortable when the child tries them on, do not buy them. Shoes should not require a period of "breaking in".
- The back of the shoe should firmly hold the heel. A small pad can be placed at the top of the back of the shoe to help reduce any friction.
- Footwear should have reflective material if shoes will be worn outside during times of reduced visibility.
- Have your child walk around the store with the shoes on for a few minutes to see if any irritation spots occur.
- Footwear constructed of breathable materials like leather or cotton is better for foot health than shoes made of synthetics or plastics
- Cross trainers are great for general classes and activities. However, if your child is playing a specific sport, shoes specifically designed for that sport should be worn.
- Shoes that lace provide better support holding the heel in place than those with Velcro. Although Velcro is more convenient, it does not provide the same support.
- If your child uses an orthotic or brace, discuss proper footwear with the care provider to determine proper fit.



Children's feet vary greatly in shape and size. Children also have their own unique walking pattern. Any shoe that causes your child discomfort when walking or running should not be used.

Signs of improper footwear:

- Redness or red marks on the back of the heel or anywhere on the feet that persist beyond 10 minutes after the shoe is removed
- Blisters
- Child's toes curl while wearing the shoes
- Shoes are too small - the child is no longer able to wiggle toes in the shoes
- Worn shoes or uneven wear on shoes
- Child is complaining of foot and or ankle pain.

If you or your child is experiencing a foot or ankle problem, call the Exeter Hospital Information and Referral Center at 603-580-6668

References:

www.apma.org/learn/healthyfeettips.cfm?ItemNumber-986

www.aofas.org/footcaremd/how-to/footwear/pages/how-to-select-children-shoes.aspx

www.epodiatry.com/children-footwear.htm

