

Picking The Right (And Left) Shoe

Qualities to look for when choosing shoes to use with orthotics

A proper fitting shoe can be difficult to find when the foot and ankle are healing from injury. Whether to pick a dress shoe or an athletic shoe might be difficult depending on wardrobe requirements. When a foot orthotic is prescribed, the task is even harder. Issues may include roominess or volume, length and width, and stiffness and flexibility. The “best” shoe is the one which will give you the most comfort. Knowing the elements of shoe construction can help you choose a shoe that will bring about a significant drop in pain level and improve your overall daily function.

There are several key features to look for:

- 1) A firm heel counter (squeeze the back of the shoe; supports the heel on orthotic)
- 2) A stiff mid-foot (shoe SHOULD NOT bend back on itself under the arch; balance and support)
- 3) A flexible forefoot (the shoe SHOULD bend back on itself under the toes; better mobility)
- 4) A deep toe-box (the toes should be free to move and not rub on the top of the shoe)
- 5) A wide width (reduces pressure across the balls of the feet)

“What’s the difference between walking and running shoes? Can you recommend a certain brand?”

Walking versus running shoes: Walking specific shoes typically have more structured features and are heavier than traditional running shoes. However, these days, running shoes are being built with all the same control features, are not as heavy, and are more breathable than a walking shoe. OrthoBethesda recommends but does not endorse shoe companies. One of the best shoes on the market today is the New Balance 847V2 because it has all these features and will fit orthotics well. The depth of the 847V2 and its well-placed lacing system make it a good option for both supinated (pes cavus, high arch) feet and pronated (pes planus, low arch) feet.

Dress shoes come in a variety of styles, some with buckles, some slip on, others have laces or even Velcro closures. Casual dress shoes have a relaxed style and often are roomier and built with greater attention to foot comfort. The Drew Delite women’s mary jane style is a perfect shoe to give an element of style while wearing a custom orthotic. For men, the Dockers Gordon Oxford blends traditional fashion with orthopedic function for a comfortable fit.

For more information regarding orthotics and footwear, contact Chris Gracey, MPT, Pedorthist at OrthoBethesda Orthotics 240-482-2438