

Footwear Advice Leaflet

The footwear you choose can help treat any Musculoskeletal (MSK) problems you may have. MSK problems are injuries or pain in the body's joints, ligaments, muscles, nerves, tendons, and structures that support limbs, neck and back.

This leaflet will give you simple practical information about what features to look for in your footwear to help treat your problem. You can use this leaflet as a reminder of the advice your clinician gave you at your consultation.

Your clinician will choose the design features you need to look for when selecting shoes to help your MSK problem.

What to consider

There are 2 things to consider when purchasing footwear:

1. The fit of the shoe which is how comfortable it is
2. The function which is how the design of the shoe effects the movement and function of your foot.

Fit

What is a good shoe?

- 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 be made from a natural fibre such as leather which 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 with buckles or Velcro.
- The front of the shoe should be round and deep to give the toes room to move.
- The heel should be less than 4cm high, broad and stable.
- 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.
- Ideally the shoe will have a thick, lightweight, rubber sole of a non-slip material.

What is an unsuitable shoe?

- A "slip on" or court shoe which is kept on the foot by curling the toes. Slip-on shoes have to be wedged on to stay on the foot and this can damage the toes or 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.
- A thin, hard sole, which will not cushion your foot comfortably.
- Very soft flexible shoes which offer no support to the foot.

Other things to consider

Insoles

As part of your treatment you may be prescribed corrective insoles or orthoses within your shoes. These may be simple heel pads or insoles that protect a tender joint or a complex orthosis that corrects the way the foot functions. In order for this treatment to succeed, you must wear the correct type of shoe.

It is recommended that shoes to incorporate insoles should have:

- Increased depth at the toe and the heel
- Adjustable fastening
- No more than 4cm heel height
- A Removable insole to allow easy accommodation of the orthoses