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Keep Kids' Feet Healthy with the Right Back-to-School Shoes

The start of a new school year brings about two certainties: new clothes and new shoes. Unlike in years past, today's shelves are stocked with a variety of shoe types that run the gamut in style and fit. As such, parents have much more to consider when shopping for back-to-school shoes.

To make things easier at the shoe store, follow these tips to help minimize foot problems caused by poorly fitting or worn-out shoes.

Shoes Should Fit

Your child's feet can grow up to two sizes in six months, so you need to account for growth when buying shoes. That does not mean you should buy shoes that are too big—oversized shoes cause the foot to slide forward, putting excessive pressure on the toes. A good fit is about a finger's width from the end of the shoe to the tip of the big toe.

Tight shoes can cause blisters, corns and calluses on your child's toes, blisters on the back of the heels or ingrown nails, which can become infected. Signs of infection from ingrown nails include pain, redness or fluid draining from the area. If you notice any of these symptoms, schedule an appointment with your local foot and ankle surgeon so s/he can perform a simple and safe procedure to remove the nail.

Shoes Wear Out

Shoes lose their shock absorption over time, so inspect new and old shoes for proper cushioning and arch support. Worn-out shoes



elevate the risk for heel pain, Achilles tendonitis and even ankle sprains and stress fractures. Replace any shoes with wear and tear around the edges of the sole. When buying shoes, make sure that the toe box flexes easily and the shoe does not bend in the middle of the sole.

Children with Flat Feet

Children with flat feet need shoes with a wide toe box, maximum arch support and shock absorption. The best shoes to buy are oxford, lace-up shoes that have enough depth for an orthotic insert, if necessary.

If you have questions about which shoes are right for your child, make an appointment with your local foot and ankle surgeon. To find one near you, visit FootHealthFacts.org.

Ankle Fractures Often Not Diagnosed



Mistaking an ankle fracture for an ankle sprain has serious consequences when the foot does not heal correctly. A correct diagnosis ensures proper recovery and reduces long-term complications.

An ankle fracture involves a crack or break in the bones that form the ankle joint. A sprain involves the ligaments that hold the ankle bones together. Both injuries can happen simultaneously when the ankle moves beyond its normal range of motion, but a fracture

requires more complex treatment than a sprain.

Pain and inability to walk are not good tests to determine if an ankle injury is a sprain or a fracture because walking is still possible with less severe injuries. Telltale signs of a fracture include bruising, blisters, significant swelling or bone protruding through the skin. In addition to bone, ankle fractures can also involve cartilage surrounding bones.

Those with unrecognized ankle fractures have a high risk of developing infection, arthritis and foot deformities that may make it impossible to walk normally again. Among those at highest risk for ankle fractures are postmenopausal women ages 50 to 70 with osteoporosis.

If you have suffered an ankle injury and are not sure if it is a fracture or a sprain, call your local foot and ankle surgeon as soon as possible to schedule an evaluation. If it is an urgent situation, visit your closest Emergency Department.

Protect Your Feet During Fall Yard Cleanup

Fall is the time to clear out the remains of summer gardens from the yard. Keep your feet and ankles safe from injury by following these helpful tips:

Wear Appropriate Shoes for the Task

No matter how warm it is, do not wear sandals. Wear sturdy leather shoes with support to protect your feet from sharp objects, including the blades from power equipment.

Keep Children Away from Power Equipment

Protect your kids and others from severe trauma. Leaf blowers, power lawnmowers and chainsaws should not be left out where kids are playing or where other inexperienced users have access.

Do Not Work on Wet Surfaces

You could easily slip and injure an ankle when carrying heavy loads across wet grass or leaves in your yard.

Remember, yard work is a workout! Warm up and perform stretching exercises before starting yard work, just as you would before working out at the gym. By stretching prior to activity, you can help avoid stressing muscles and tendons in the foot, ankle and calves.

Contact a foot and ankle surgeon for more tips on how to keep your feet safe during fall yard cleanup.

Visit FootHealthFacts.org to find one near you.



Enjoy Your Fall Hikes Without a Foot or Ankle Injury

In the United States, more than 38 million people annually go hiking, and the popular recreational activity has seen increased interest in its more competitive and extreme forms. This, however, has led to an increase in foot and ankle injuries nationwide.

Hiking-related injuries range from minor concerns, such as blisters and bruises, to more serious conditions, including stress fractures and ankle sprains. These complex hiking injuries may initially be assessed as less serious or even overlooked as an overuse injury that will repair itself. Some hikers first attempt to treat pain by modifying their walk (gait) or pace or by switching shoes. While these kinds of modifications seem straightforward, they can actually contribute to complications and further injury.

Careful preparation can help reduce the likelihood of injury and can make it easier for a foot and ankle surgeon to treat when problems occur. Before you head out on the trails this fall:

- Wear properly fitting footwear to protect your toes from blisters and your toenails from bruises.
- Wear socks that wick away moisture and protect from the cold.
- Condition boots before setting out on a hike.
- Know the hiking route and options for accessing medical assistance.
- Carry supplies, such as bandages and wraps, to help protect and stabilize injured feet and ankles.



If you suffer an injury while hiking, visit your local foot and ankle surgeon or visit the closest Emergency Department. If you need a foot and ankle surgeon, visit FootHealthFacts.org to find one in your neighborhood.