



Choosing Shoes



With each step you take, the shoes you wear impact the joints and muscles of your feet, ankles, knees, hips, and spine. Pain and injury can be avoided by wearing the proper shoe for your body and foot type, especially when you participate in play and athletic activities. Your doctor or physical therapist will watch the way you walk to identify your body and foot type. The alignment of your foot while standing, walking or running may be described as “neutral”, “flat” or “rigid”.

Neutral (“normal”) means that the inside border of your foot curves slightly off the floor when standing, creating a visible arch. When walking, your heel strikes the ground first, followed by the middle section of your foot, and finally pushing off with all of your toes.

Flat means that the inside border of your foot nearly or completely touches the floor when standing. When walking your foot is too flexible. You push off from the inside border of your foot and big toe. This is also called “overpronation”.

Rigid means that your weight is on the outside border of your foot when standing and walking. When you walk your foot is not flexible enough to provide shock absorption. This is also called “supination”.

Choosing the proper shoe for your foot type will keep your foot and body better supported when walking and playing. If you have an injury or pain, it is vital you wear proper footwear during your athletic activities (including PE class and physical therapy sessions).

It is best if you wear good shoes all day long!

Specialty athletic/running shoe stores will be best equipped to help you find the right shoes for your foot type (try *A Snail's Pace* or *Road Runner Sports*). They are trained to assess the way your shoes help you as you walk or run. However, if you know what you are looking for, you should be able to find a good athletic shoe anywhere. **Follow the guidelines below to find the right shoes for you.**

If you have FLAT/OVERPRONATED feet, look for shoes that have:

- 1) **A straight last.** This means the bottom of the shoe is relatively straight. Turn the shoe upside down and look to make sure the border is fairly straight (see picture at right).
- 2) **A rigid sole.** When you twist the shoe holding the toe and the heel, it does not move much. Shoe companies might call this “rigid”, “stability” or “motion control”.
- 3) **Medial posting.** The inside border of the shoe has extra firm plastic to prevent the inside border of your foot from collapsing; it is also called “arch support”.
- 4) **A firm heel counter.** When you squeeze the heel of the shoe near the sole, it should feel firm.



Brands to try: New Balance®, Saucony®, Brooks®, Asics®, Mizuno®.

You can also improve the arch support of your current shoes by removing the insoles and putting in over-the-counter orthotics, such as Superfeet®. These are sold at athletic shoe stores and in the CHOC outpatient pharmacy.

If you have RIGID/SUPINATED feet, look for shoes that have:

- 1) **A curved last.** This means the bottom of the shoe is relatively curved. Turn the shoe upside down and look to make sure the border is curved (see picture at left).
- 2) **A flexible sole.** When you twist the shoe holding the toe and the heel, it moves well. Shoe companies might call this “torsion” or “shock absorption”.



Brands to try: Adidas®, New Balance®, Saucony®.

If you have questions, bring your new shoes for your doctor or therapist to check. They will be happy to ensure that your feet are getting the best care possible!