

# If the Shoe Fits...

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Most of us, unless we have foot problems, don't always think about how much pounding, wear and tear our feet endure over the years.

Poorly fitting shoes can cause bunions, corns, calluses, hammer toes, and other foot problems. Disease, poor circulation, and improperly trimmed toenails may also cause foot pain, ulcers, or worse, even infections leading to amputation.

What can you do to prevent foot problems?

Practice good foot care by trimming toenails straight across, not too short, using moisturizer to moisturize your feet, keep blood circulating by putting your feet up when sitting or lying down, not sitting for long periods with legs crossed, not smoking, or exposing feet to cold temperatures. Use pumice stone once a month to remove unwanted skin and thick calluses. Dry your feet well after bathing.

One of the most important steps you can take is to choose and wear shoes that fit. Here are some suggestions on proper shoe fit from the American Orthopedic Foot & Ankle Society:

- ❖ Sizes vary among shoe brands & styles. Don't select shoes by the size marked inside the shoe.
- ❖ Select a shoe that conforms as nearly as possible to the shape of your foot.
- ❖ The size of your feet changes as you grow older so have your feet measured regularly.
- ❖ Have both feet measured. Most people have one foot larger than the other, so fit to the largest foot.
- ❖ The best time to measure is at the end of the day when your feet are largest.
- ❖ Stand during the fitting process and check that there is adequate space (3/8" to 1/2") for your longest toe at the end of each shoe.
- ❖ Make sure the ball of your foot fits comfortably into the widest part of the shoe.
- ❖ Don't purchase shoes that feel too tight, expecting them to "stretch" to fit.
- ❖ Your heel should fit comfortably in the shoe with minimum amount of slippage.
- ❖ Walk in the shoe to make sure it fits and feels right! The upper part of shoes should be made of a soft, flexible material, soles should provide solid footing and not be slippery. Thick soles cushion your feet when walking on hard surfaces. Low heeled shoes are more comfortable, safer, and less damaging. Shoes made of leather can reduce possibility of skin irritations.

Another aspect of proper shoe fit is the arch, if you are a "pronator" (flat arch) make sure you have plenty of arch support. If you have a high rigid arch, you may need some extra support with custom orthotics. Talk to your local physical therapist. Many times they provide foot molds or can recommend a certified orthotist to meet your needs. In the mean time, keep on walkin'!