Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Retail Footwear Advice

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Retail Footwear Advice

Patient Information

Podiatry Service

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General information

The footwear we wear is vital for our feet to work correctly.

They are the first thing that contact the ground and are the connection between the floor and our feet. Footwear needs to support the foot in its function, whether it is slippers, shoes, boots, or trainers

The correct footwear can make the difference between pain and comfort.



Heel Counter

This is the area that supports the heel of the foot. It should be a full heel counter and not a sling back or open back. The heel counter should be firm, so that it can't be compressed from side to side. This gives stability to the foot.

Heel Height/Shape

The height and shape of the heel will play a major role in the alignment of the foot/ankle/knee/hip/back and will also determine how stable the foot is as it contacts the ground. The height of the heel should generally be no higher than 4 cm and no less than 1 cm. The heel shape from the back view should be a square shape and the same width, or wider than the upper of the shoe, not triangular. A square heel will stabilise the foot better as it contacts the ground in walking.

The sole

There are two main areas of the sole unit of a shoe, the forefoot, which is the area under the ball of the foot and the mid sole, which is the area under the arch. The forefoot area of the sole should firm and not too flexible; it may have cushioning on the inside. The mid-sole of the shoe needs to be firm, supportive, and inflexible.

Length

This is the shoe size but be aware that the shoe size is only a guide to the length and not all manufacturers have the same measurements. Therefore, you should always try the shoe on and ensure that there is about 1 cm additional length past the end of your longest toe. This allows for the foot elongating during walking.

Width/Shape

The width of the toe box is important. There should be adequate material in the upper of the shoe to allow the joints of the foot to fit inside the shoe without the upper pressing onto the joints. The shape of the toe box is also important and should not taper into a triangular shape; it should be a rounded/square shape and should not crowd the toes.

Depth

The depth at the end of the toe box is also important, because if the shoe tapers off too much, it can lead to pressure on the top of the toes and nails.

Fastening system

As we have already discussed, if a shoe fits correctly, there should be no pressure from the upper onto the joints of the forefoot. It is therefore advisable to get a fasten-on style shoe, be it laces, Velcro or buckles. This will allow you to get a shoe with plenty of room at the forefoot, yet still anchored well onto the foot.

Slip-on style shoes may be too slack and keep slipping off or may be too tight and cause pressure on the forefoot. Slip-on shoes, by design, must be too tight to stay on. Always ensure that the fastening system is located across the top of the foot near the ankle and not too low down the foot, as this would make the fastening system ineffective.

Please contact if you require any further information:

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