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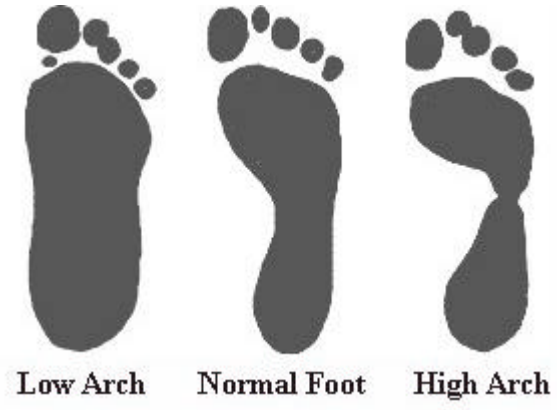
SELECTING ATHLETIC SHOES

Exercising and athletic activities are one of the best ways to keep you in good physical and mental health. Well-fitting, well-constructed shoes are a key to the prevention of sport injury. Before you choose athletic shoes you need to be aware of the size and shape of your feet and understand the mechanics of walking.

- Foot Size – You probably already know your shoe size, but if you are not sure you can measure your feet with a Brannock device, which is available in most shoe stores.

- Foot Shape – A simple way to find out what foot shape you have is by looking at the footprint you leave on the bathroom bathmat after you get out of the shower. The wider and straighter the footprint, the lower your arch is. A very narrow, curved footprint suggests a high arch. Somewhere in between these two is the "normal" foot. (See diagram below)



- Mechanics of Walking – Usually, as your foot strikes the ground heel first, it rolls slightly ***inwards***, flattening the arches so your foot can absorb the shock of walking. This inward movement is known as ***Pronation***. Next your foot rolls slightly to the outside, stiffening up to become a rigid lever for the next step. This ***outward*** motion is known ***Supination***.

- Shape of Shoes – The shape of your footprint should match that of your shoe.
  - Straight Last – for low arch feet
  - Curved Last – for high arch feet
  - Semi-Curved Last – for in-between arch feet

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RUNNING SHOES – They are good for running and walking activities.

- Maximum cushioning in the heel. Heel counter provides stability and rigidity to rear foot.
- Heel is raised ½to 1 inch above ground.
- Sole flexes at the point where the toes join the foot.
- Common running injuries include Achilles Tendonitis, Plantarfasciitis, and Runner's Knee.

COURT SPORTS SHOES – They are good for tennis, basketball and volleyball activities. Feet are put under considerable stress by the continuous side-to-side motion and quick stopping and starting that these sports require.

- Soles require a cushioning system to allow for soft landing.
- Shoes have a strong ankle support.
- Toe box should be wide to prevent cramping of the toes.
- Shoes have extra cushioning in the forefoot area. The soles of the shoes should be wrapped on the dorsal aspect (the sole curves over the toes in the front of the shoe) to provide additional protection to the toes.
- Upper material should ventilate well, because feet are likely to perspire.
- Common injuries for these sports include Ankle Sprains, Stress Fractures, Plantarfasciitis, and Tennis Toe. Corns, Calluses and Blisters are also common.

GRASS SPORTS SHOES – They are good for contact sports like football and soccer.

- Shoes need traction; spikes studs should be mounted to the sole of the shoes to help dig into the ground.
- The upper aspect of the shoe should be constructed of leather – which is a rigid and durable material.
- Good heel support to provide stability during running.
- Common injuries include Turf Toe, Ankle Sprains and Stress Fractures.

WALKING SHOES – The majority of Sport Walking Shoes are not well designed. The ideal walking shoe should be stable from side-to-side, and well cushioned. Many running shoes fit all of these criteria well.

CROSS-TRAINER SHOES – These sneakers are based on a running shoe that has been adapted for use in aerobic exercise and court sports.

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SHOE BUYING AND WEARING TIPS

- Buy your shoes at the end of the day, when your feet are tired and somewhat larger from the day's activities.
- Make sure there is about a finger's width at the front of the shoe. This will prevent tennis toe, which occurs when blood accumulates under the toenail.
- Make sure you try on shoes on both feet as most people have one foot that's slightly larger than the other.
- Make sure you carefully lace your shoe before running. Too tight a shoe may make parts of the top of your foot sore. Too loose a shoe may make your foot move excessively within the shoe and cause injury.
- A shoe's midsole only lasts a finite distance – 350 to 550 miles.
- Shoe wear does not necessarily reflect the loss of shock absorption by a shoe.
- Do NOT even dream of running a marathon in a new pair of shoes. Your shoe should have at least 100 miles on it to be broken in well.