Sheffield Foot & Ankle Pain

Sheffield NHS Primary Care Trust

Footwear Advice

Everyone has different shoes which we wear for different needs and activities; such as day-to-day, work, leisure, sports, dress, winter and summer.

Footwear is often implicated in a lot of foot and ankle conditions and the purpose of this section of the website is to give you some basic facts about the importance of the right footwear.

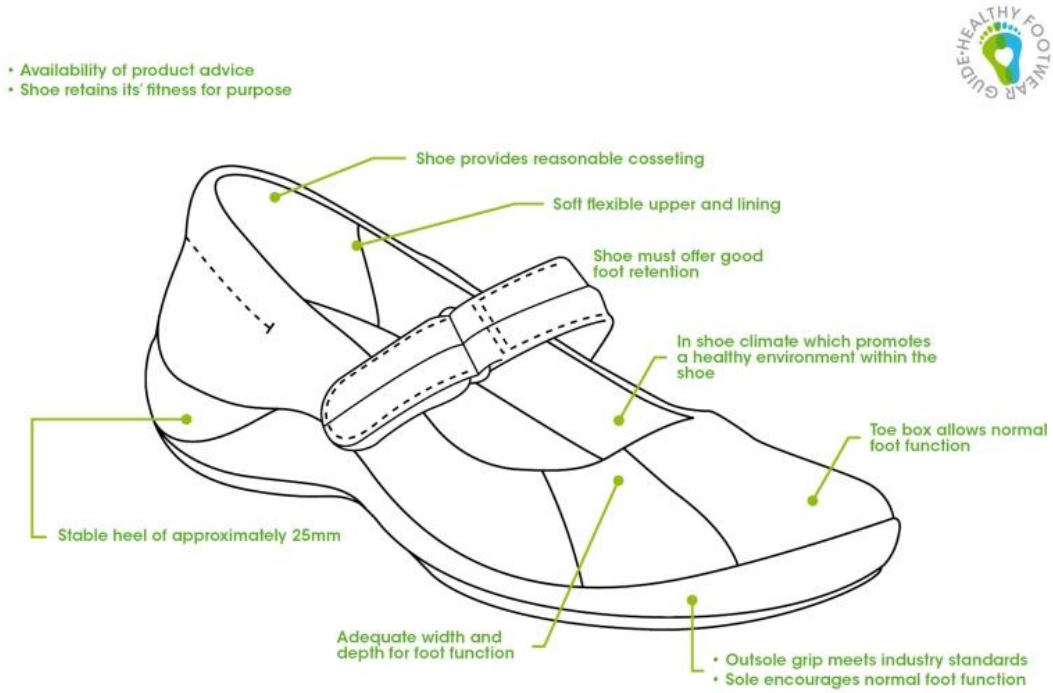
It also provides some guidance on what you can do to help yourself if you have a foot and ankle problem.

What is an ideal shoe?

Rather than re-invent the wheel, we would like to direct you to the Healthy Footwear Group website http://www.healthy-footwear-guide.com/

This is an excellent website and is the work of experts within the field of footwear, comprising of health care practitioners and shoe manufacturers. They have worked together to identify what the key features of a healthy shoe are and have identified shoes that meet these guidelines.

Healthy Footwear Guidelines



Footwear facts

Who'd have thought that 90% of the population wear one shoe size too small? Now for the majority of people this is not a problem, however, there are a number of foot and ankle conditions where this can be an aggrevating factor; bunions, hammer toes and Morton's neuroma can all be worsened by tighter shoes.

How to check your shoes are the correct size/fit?

Fitting a shoes is very involved, so much so that a lot of shoe shops have staff who have qualifications from the society of shoe fitters which aid them in getting the right fit for the customer, these fitting specialists can be located by visiting www.shoefitters-uk.org .

If you are unable to obtain advice from a third party then the healthy footwear group have some helpful instructions http://www.healthy-footwear-guide.com/fitting.html

In addition to this, Sheffield Podiatry Services have a member of staff with these qualifications and offer a shoe fit service. http://www.sheffield.nhs.uk/podiatry/contact.php Please contact the service for further information on this.

Healthy Footwear Guide If you can't obtain shoe fitting advice from a third party the following points must be considered:

• Ensure both shoes are on, correctly fastened and weight evenly distributed on both feet. It is advisable to ask a friend or family member to help

• If the purchaser uses any form of insert (orthoses) inside the footwear these must be in place before the fit assessment is conducted.

• There must be a minimum of 6mm, preferably 10mm, in front of the longest toe (click image to enlarge)

• The natural shape of the footwear forepart should not be distorted by the foot. This may indicate pressure on the top or side of the toe and toe joints.

• When drawing a thumb or finger across the forepart of the footwear there should be a slight rippling of the material but not a significant crease that would indicate the shoe is too wide.

• The toplines of the footwear should be neatly against the sides of the feet with no pressure on bony protrusions such as the ankle bone or the top of the heel curve.

• The fastening must grip the foot and allow further adjustment if required

• Elasticated gussets or laces must be under some tension to grip the foot but not fully stretched

• When walking check that:
- The shoe grips the foot and does not slip
- The sole flexes easily in the forepart
- The heel provides a stable platform
- The outsole does not slip on the surfaces the wearer will normally be walking on
- The upper material flexes with the foot and returns to its original shape
- No pinching or pressure is felt by the wearer whilst walking

The 10 second shoe fit test'

We have a quick shoe test you can do yourself to help identify which shoes are on the small side and may or may not give you some relief.

Feel across the shoe where the bunion is-does this correspond to the widest part of the shoe? And how tight does this feel-is there any give?

You will find in the shoes that are not comfy, they will be narrower in this area and the upper of the shoe will feel a lot tighter across this part of the foot (a bunion especially), whereas in the more comfy shoes the tension across this part of the shoe will be less.

Practical Footwear advice

There are 24 hours in a day, you can't always be expected to wear the same shoe – it's not possible. Certainly wearing a trainer/ wider fitting shoe may well be the most comfy shoe, however wearing such a shoe in a meeting or social event e.g wedding is not going to look right or be acceptable.

But, if they do give you relief; in what circumstance/ situations would they be OK to wear? (e.g. walking to work, pottering round the house or going out doing odd-jobs or the shopping). Do they help?

The more you can wear a roomier/supportive shoe, you are storing up Brownie points for when you wear a tighter fitting/less supportive shoe. It may allow you to wear them for longer. Also, you will know that after wearing them that you have something that will give you some ease.

Shoe test

To take this a step further, you could perform the 10 second shoe test with all your shoes - or if you have a lot, just the main ones. Feel across the widest part of the shoe, which ones have more give?

These will be the shoes that will be more comfortable for longer. You may then end up with a scale of shoes; at one end you will have a very roomy/supportive shoe that you can wear all day with comfort e.g. a trainer, but that is not a shoe you would wear on a night out.

At the other end of the scale you will then have a dress/party shoe that will be a lot tighter which you maybe able to only wear for an hour or two. This may be OK for a night out where you're not doing too much walking i.e. car to bar, but they fit the occasion.

Fashion shoes

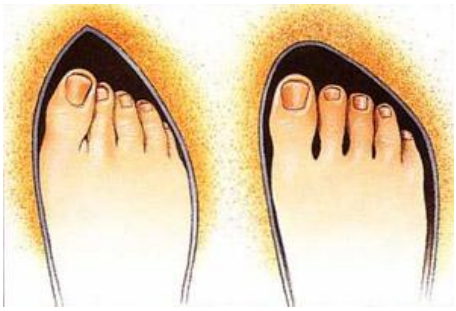
Going back to the point about 90% of the population wearing 1 size too small, this means the widest part of the foot does not sit in the widest part of the shoe. The style/shape of the shoe can further ease or exacerbate the problem.

There are some fashionable shoes that do lend themselves to giving you a bit more room to accommodate your forefoot and conditions like bunions. It is not a total

solution, but it may make an evening out more tolerable and your next day less uncomfortable.

Some styles hold their width longer, that way they leave a bit more room to accommodate bunions and hammers toes; add to that the type of material and stitch work and some will have more give than others.

Some styles of shoes taper in more than other, so certain fashion styles can be more uncomfortable than others. If you can go for a style that is square or holds the widest part for longer you might find these styles/shoes more tolerable to wear. It’s not ideal, but if its delays the pain for a while it might make your night out or special occasion more tolerable (from a foot pain perspective)



Sandals (open toes) offer more give / no pressure over bunions and hammer toes. Often bunions/hammer toes are seasonal with people being OK in the summer, but in winter they have fitting problems – enclosed shoes have less give in them.

Extra width and depth Fitting Shoes

Having gone through your current shoes if you are still having accommodation problems, then you may benefit from a shoe with more width/depth. Initially try the High Street; go get your feet measured and see if you can find a shoe that will fit your whole foot and accommodate your forefoot.

However, some people will need more width and depth than the High Street stockists can provide. Now, before you go down a surgical shoe route there are a number of extra width and depth shoes available. However, these are specialist and will only be found on mail order/Internet. Such companys that provide a range of extra width/depth shoes are:

www.simplyfeet.co.uk.

http://webstershoes.co.uk/

Both have a range of shoes and have self measurement systems that will help you find the right size.