

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO WEAR PROPER SHOES FOR RUNNING OR WORKING OUT?

Whether your workout involves running, walking, sports or gym equipment, a decent sport shoe is a must. Injury caused by inappropriate shoes can needlessly derail your fitness or weight loss attempt. Investing in a quality shoe can help you to prevent foot and ankle damage, and make your workout a more pleasant and comfortable experience. If you take your running (and your health) seriously, you should invest in a pair of shoes meant for the running gait and the specific biomechanics of a runner.

Types of Shoe

A variety of sport shoes are on the market for every type of exercise. Running shoes that have inbuilt shock absorbers are available for joggers, and lightweight walking shoes are available for walkers. Aerobic shoes are lightweight and shock absorbing to prevent foot fatigue and to cushion the ball of the foot, which is put under pressure from aerobic exercise. Tennis shoes have flexible soles to protect your feet from the quick side-to-side movements of tennis and is meant for sliding over clay or grass, not to propel you forward for miles, going from pavement to grass to the occasional puddle. Thick-soled, high top basketball shoes provide extra protection against ankle and foot injuries caused by jumping. Cross-training shoes are also available. These are suitable if you perform a number of sport or exercise types in your workout.

There are also some other aspects, such as grip and protection. The most important design elements of a running shoe, though, are the ones relative to promoting a correct gait and helping you absorb some of the impact with the ground, which is what eventually leads to joint overuse and injury.

The Most Important Things When Shopping for Running Shoes

The American Orthopaedic Foot & Ankle Society recommends that the type of shoe you choose should depend on the sport you are most active in. If you perform a certain type of exercise three times a week or more, choose a corresponding sport shoe.

Let's start from the most essential aspect of a pair of running shoes - fit. There is nothing worse than running in a shoe that is too small (no, they won't "give in and feel better"), too big, too narrow, or with a heel that rubs and blisters you. Take the time to try both shoes on, and if possible, have a little run in the shop or on a treadmill.

Here are some more suggestions about finding the right fit:

- The McKinley Health Centre recommends that you try on shoes in the afternoon or evening, or after your workout as your feet are largest at these times.
- Make sure the heel is not slipping. The shoe should not be small, but if your heel keeps slipping out, you need to revisit your lacing or choose a different shoe.
- When checking for the size, wear the same sports socks you will be using for running and leave half a centimetre or space between your big toe and the end of the shoe. Feet swell during exercise and a shoe that is "just right" in the shop, will most likely feel too small during a run.
- Laces should be tight so that the shoe doesn't move around, but not so tight that you cut off circulation.
- Make sure the breath ability of the shoe you choose that matches the weather you are planning to run in. Open mesh helps you cool your feet especially in hot climates, but you wouldn't want it if you run on cold winter mornings.
- Bend the shoe to make sure it is not overly flexible as this can indicate a lack of support.

Benefits of a Proper Shoe

Choosing a proper shoe can help to protect you against common injuries associated with your type of workout. Good shoes can lessen the impact of your step and cushion the foot from heavy landings. In addition, sport or exercise specific shoes can improve your performance, enabling, for example, quick direction changes.

Foot Injuries and Shoes

Improper workout footwear can cause a number of injuries. Besides the more obvious injuries, including ankle strains and fractures, bunions and corns, some other lesser known injuries are common. Metatarsalgia, a condition which presents as pain in the ball of the foot, can be worsened by poorly fitting footwear.

Replacing Your Shoes

Worn out sport shoes do not provide your feet with adequate protection during your workout. According to Michigan State University Extension, running shoes should be replaced after every 350 to 500 miles. If you run 20 miles a week, this means you should replace your shoes every 20 to 25 weeks. Netwellness advises against judging the wear of your shoes from the treads on the bottom. Instead, check the mid-sole of the shoe that will show damage sooner.

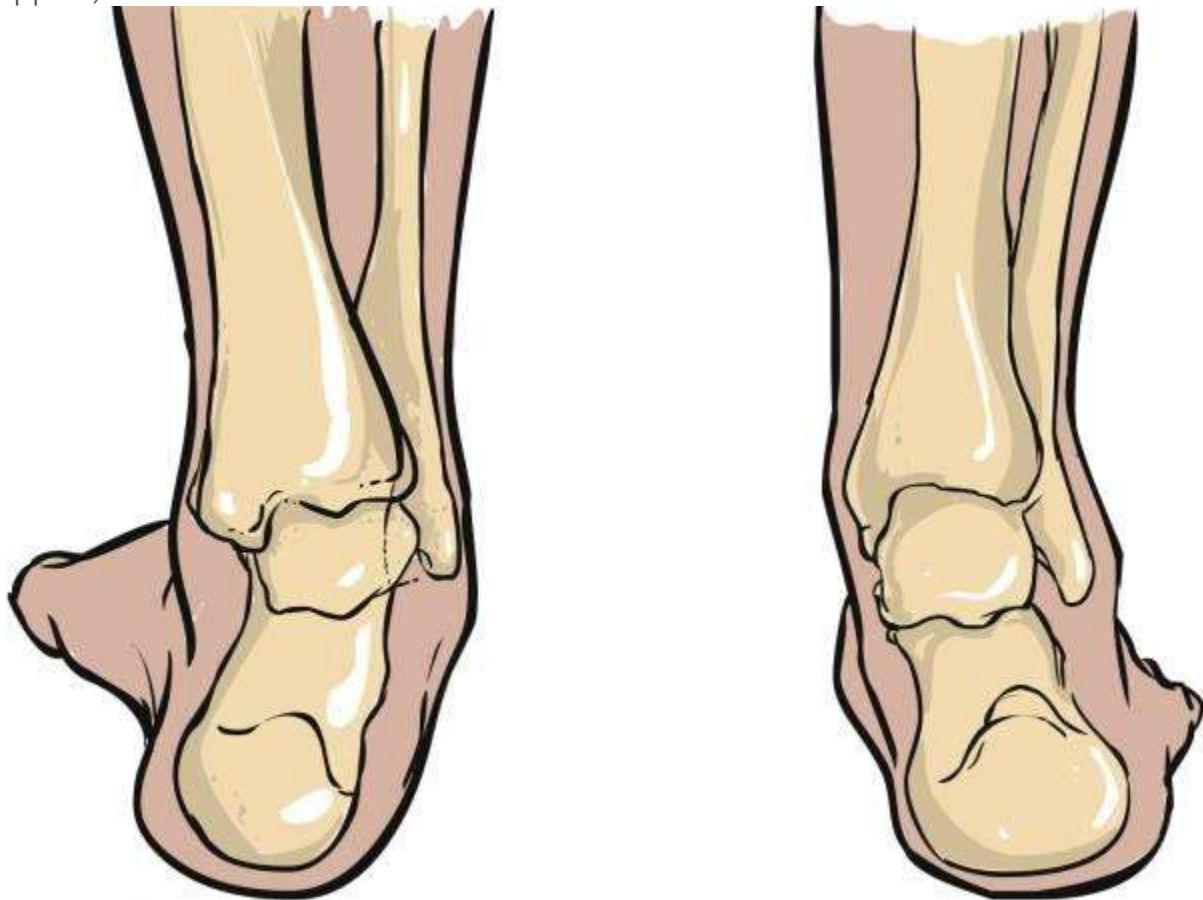
Do You Need to Spend a Lot of Money?

Top-shelf running shoes start \$150+ and they are indeed better than the cheaper alternatives, being lighter in weight and using premium materials that last longer and protect you better.

The Traditional Running Shoes Categories

For the past two decades, runners have been split into different categories depending on their pronation, which is how much your arch collapses during the running gait. The collapsing of the arch (pronation) is your body's natural way of absorbing the shock of the impact with the ground. Pronation is good, but sometimes runners pronate too much, meaning they have a flat arch and the foot rolls inward excessively while running. Sometimes they don't pronate enough, with an arch that does not collapse at all.

Traditional running shoe categories include cushioning (or neutral) and stability (or support):



Cushioning running shoes are for runners who don't pronate enough (under pronators). These shoes have softer materials in the midsole (be it air, or gel, or a softer EVA foam) to help the runner absorb the shock. They are the most common running shoes and the most popular models are the Nike Pegasus, the Asics Nimbus, and the Brooks Glycerin.

Stability running shoes are for the runner who pronates excessively, with an arch that collapses almost entirely. Stability shoes are meant to provide the foot with support that helps the runner's foot keep to the ideal gait line. Most stability shoes use a feature called dual density foam, which is visible by a darker insert of foam (usually grey) in the medial - or internal - side of the sole of the shoe. This harder foam compound is placed right under the ankle and prevents it to collapse. Popular stability running shoes are the Mizuno Inspire, Brooks Adrenaline, and New Balance 860.