

CHILDREN'S SHOES

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CAUTION: The information contained in this publication is intended only to help prevent foot problems in normal healthy feet. If problems arise, they should receive the attention of a specialist.

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"Look At My New Shoes"

Children like shoes that are similar to those their friends wear. Children also like shiny new shoes that attract attention.

BUT fit is important too. Many adult foot ills can be traced to out-grown, hand-me-down and incorrectly shaped shoes that have forced pliable young feet out of shape.

Look at your child's shoes. Do they fit properly? Are they correctly shaped? Are they well made? You, the parent, are responsible for the health of your children's feet.

The Infant

Kicking and toe-wiggling are natural exercises that develop muscles of the feet and legs and prepare your infant for walking. Until your baby stands alone he doesn't need any footcovering, except perhaps for warmth. Anything you put on his feet should be soft and roomy. Socks and booties should have broad toes. Don't use them if they shrink in laundering because your baby's foot is extremely pliable and anything that alters its natural course of development can cause permanent damage.

The Toddler

When your child first stands unaided he needs shoes that will protect his feet and provide him a stable standing base. His first shoe, called a "pre-walker," should have a soft, flexible, full-cut leather upper and a thin ($\frac{1}{8}$ inch) flexible leather sole.

Never force your child to stand or urge him to walk. He will stand when the bones, muscles and tendons of his feet and legs are developed enough to support the weight of his body.

The question of whether or not to put your baby in high top shoes is up to you and your pediatrician. High top shoes are more difficult for your baby to

remove than are oxfords, but normally they are not needed for ankle support. If you decide to use them, the tops should be soft and flexible enough to permit the ankle to bend naturally.

The Older Child

After your child begins to run about he needs a sturdier shoe. One with a firm but flexible $\frac{1}{4}$ inch leather sole and a $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{3}{8}$ inch heel is adequate for the growing foot. A sturdy heel counter that springs back into place when pressed down holds the child's heel in place and keeps it from slipping as he runs about.

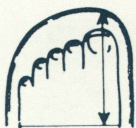
The Summer Months

Children often kick off their school shoes at the first sign of warm weather and spend the rest of the summer barefooted or in lightweight play shoes. Actually there is nothing wrong with going barefoot. Walking without shoes allows the toes to extend and grip the ground, one of the best foot exercises there is, providing it is done on soft grass, sand or carpet where there is no danger of stepping on broken glass, nails, pins or sharp stones.

Sneakers are softer and more elastic than leather and may actually be one of the best shoes you can buy for a **healthy foot**. A healthy foot does not require support. In fact, the great flexibility of sneakers gives the muscles of the foot freedom to develop.

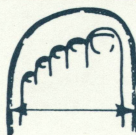
If your child spends a lot of time playing on cement playgrounds and sidewalks, a thick-soled basketball or professional type tennis shoe is a good investment. Its thick resilient sole helps young feet take the pounding that hard surfaces give them.

However, rubber soles puncture more easily than leather and they do not allow the feet to breathe. Remember, fungi that cause athlete's foot, one of the most common childhood foot ailments, thrive in warm, dark, damp shoes. Whenever your children wear sneakers be sure they wear clean, absorbent cotton or wool socks.



Fitting Children's Shoes

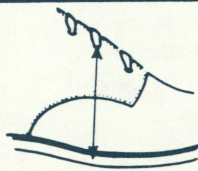
Length:
 $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ inch longer than the longest toe.



Width:
 Wide enough for all the toes to rest on the sole of the shoe. You should be able to pinch a small crease in the leather between your thumb and forefinger.



Toe Height:
 Deep enough to avoid pinching.



Instep:
 The instep should be full enough to permit freedom of movement. If the instep width is correct there will be no pulling or strain around the laces.



Heel:
 The heel should fit snugly without being tight.



Shape of Shoe:
 The shape of the sole should conform to the shape of the foot. The inner edge of the shoe should form a straight line.



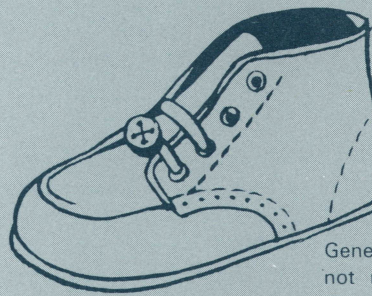
Length from Heel to Ball:
 The widest part of the shoe should correspond to the ball of the foot. The shank should fit well up under the arch.

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A child's first shoe should be soft and flexible and should provide plenty of toe room.



Generally, high top shoes are not needed for ankle support. If you decide to put your baby in them, be sure the tops are soft and flexible.



This shoe is cut too skimpily and does not provide enough toe room.





Contrary to popular belief, sandals do not make the feet spread. A well-fitted sandal allows the feet freedom to develop naturally.

Sandals are often fitted small to help them stay on the feet. Look for styles with closed backs or wide straps to minimize this problem.

A good quality sneaker may be one of the best shoes for **healthy** young feet. Look for a professional basketball shoe or a professional tennis shoe with thick resilient soles.

Canvas shoes of this type are often fitted short to help them stay on the foot. Furthermore, the thin sole does not adequately protect young feet from the beating they take on cement sidewalks and playgrounds.

A good shoe is durable, yet flexible. Although roomy, it stays securely on the foot.

Guide to Rate of Foot Growth

Age	Rate of Size Change
2-6	every 1-2 months
6-10	every 2-3 months
10-12	every 3-4 months
12-15	every 4-5 months
15-20	every 6 months
over 20	have both feet measured each time shoes are purchased.

Mary Janes and similar styles are acceptable for dressy occasions but should not be worn continuously. These styles tend to be stiff and generally they provide less toe room than oxfords. Furthermore, they are often hard for the child to keep on her foot.

People tend to buy loafers, flats and other low cut shoes too short and too tight to help them stay on the feet.

Loafers that are cut high in the vamp area stay on the feet better than low cut ones. Many styles also have elastic across the instep to help keep the shoe in place.

Strap styles stay on the feet more securely than low cut flats.



School Means New Shoes

Your child's feet and shoes can affect the way he performs in the classroom and participates on the playground. Get your child off to a good start with a pair of well-made shoes that protect pliable young feet from the pounding they take on hard cement sidewalks and playgrounds and tile floors. Even if last year's school shoes still look good, be sure to check the size; young feet grow very rapidly in the hot summer months.

Fit — The Most Important Consideration

Fit, not durability, is the most important consideration when buying children's shoes. Most children outgrow their shoes before they wear them out because their feet grow so rapidly. Your child's feet can grow as much as three sizes in just a few months. Children don't always know when their shoes have been outgrown. Because young feet are soft and pliable, children can force their feet into shoes that are several sizes too small.

Shoes, unlike other articles of clothing, cannot be altered to fit. Never let your children wear hand-me-down shoes. It's false economy to save outgrown shoes for younger members of your family. Normally shoes give and conform to the shape of the foot after several wearings, offering maximum support. However, once molded to a foot the shoe will not remold to another. The soft pliable foot of the youngster will be forced to assume the shape of the shoe, causing innumerable problems in later years.

Your child may be wearing outgrown or misfitted shoes if he complains of tired feet or takes off his shoes every chance he gets. If he becomes less active, loses interest in active play and begs off when activities involve walking, his shoes may be the reason. Examine your child's feet and shoes regularly to be sure that the shoes fit properly and have not been outgrown.

1) Check the length of his shoe.

Have your child stand so that his feet are supporting the weight of his body. Press the end of his shoe with your thumb. There should be $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ inch between his longest toe and the end of his shoe.

2) Take a look at his shoes. Prevent future foot problems by examining your child's shoes periodically for signs of improper fit:

- Tip of toe curled or excessively worn.
- Soles worn unevenly, especially if they show excessive wear on the inner edge.
- Heels run over.
- Upper bulges over the sole or is twisted.
- Toes have worn pockets into the linings.
- Heel counter broken down.

3) Check his feet.

Examine your child's feet when he first removes his shoes and socks for signs of improperly fitted or outgrown shoes:

- Pink or red spots on his feet may mean that his shoe:
 - is too narrow;
 - is too tight;
 - is too short;
 - has wrinkles or torn linings; or has rough bulky seams or stitching.
- Corns and calluses mean pressure from poorly-fitted shoes.
- Blisters may mean rubbing or improper fit.

Buy Footwear that Fits

Additional peace of mind comes with purchasing your child's shoes from a reputable shoe fitter. See that both feet are measured while standing as well as sitting each time shoes are purchased. Straighten the child's toes to be sure that the measurement is accurate.

When you find a pair of shoes the child likes, have him walk around the store in them. A correctly-fitted shoe does not have to be broken in. Either it fits or it doesn't.

When you buy larger shoes, be sure to check the size of your child's socks, too. Socks should be at least $\frac{1}{2}$ inch longer than the longest toe.

Buy Quality

The most expensive shoe is not always the best for your child's feet. Some are made of stiff hard leathers that bruise tender young feet. The shank and sole of others are so stiff that they don't bend with the foot. When you shop look for the following construction features:

- 1) Firm but pliable **leather** gives with the foot and allows it to breathe.
- 2) **Rubber heel lifts** are quiet and are good shock absorbers.
- 3) A good leather **heel counter** springs back into place when pressed down. It should be firm enough so that the two sides cannot be pressed together.
- 4) A firm but flexible **shank** supports the arch between the heel and the ball of the shoe.
- 5) Leather or drill cloth **linings** cover seams, make the inside of the shoe smoother and absorb perspiration.
- 6) The **welt** is a narrow leather strip that holds the upper to the sole and helps make a shoe waterproof. Welt construction generally makes a sole sturdier and less flexible.
- 7) A **well-finished** shoe has no exposed tacks, bulky seams, raw edges or bulky stitching.

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James E. Kraus, Director