

Client Handout



What is Your Shoe I.Q.?

Answer the following questions: True or False

1. Poor fitting shoes can cause or aggravate an injury.
2. Feet widen and lengthen with age.
3. The cushioning in a shoe is to prevent bunions.
4. Shoes do not affect the knees and low back.
5. There is more than one way to lace a shoe.
6. Shoes are interchangeable; a running shoe can be used for step aerobics.
7. Shoe size is not important; fit is.
8. The best time to try on shoes is after a workout when your feet are largest.
9. Someone with a low, flat arch tends to over-pronate.
10. Someone with a high arch tends to under-pronate.

(Answers to these questions can be found at the end of this article)

Exercise / athletic shoes are intended to dissipate the impact of weight-bearing activity, minimize lateral instability and prevent foot, ankle, knee, and back problems. Shoe manufacturers, through technology, have greatly improved shoe comfort, fit and injury prevention by designing sports specific footwear. Running shoes are not appropriate for group exercise classes because of the wide outsoles that extend past the foot to prevent lateral motion. Aerobic shoes are flexible in the ball of the foot, have rigid rear-foot construction, cushioning in the toe box and heel areas and a narrow outsole. Selecting a shoe that fits you and your intended activity is essential to injury prevention, maximum performance and enjoyment of your activity. Fit and comfort are important, but also very subjective. A shoe that works for one person may not work well for another.

When purchasing fitness shoes remember these guidelines:

- Shop around; try on a variety of shoes and shoe sizes.
- Know your foot type: Do you have high or low arches? Narrow or wide fore foot? High instep? Bunions? Does your foot tend to pronate (Roll the sole of the foot to the inside edge of your shoe) or supinate (Roll the sole of your foot to the outside edge of your shoe)?

- Shoes that are more expensive are not necessarily better shoes.
- Choose reputable, name brand shoes.
- Shop at a time when your feet are at their largest, usually in the evening or after a workout.
- Try on both the right and left shoe.
- Walk, jog, side step in each pair of shoes to mimic the activities you will do in the shoe.
- Be sure to assess the overall cushioning, flexibility and stability of the shoe.
- Look for a comfortable roomy toe box and a snug fitting heel cup.

Do your feet hurt? Ill-fitting shoes can aggravate and even cause foot problems. Some of the most common shoe related problems include:

- Heel pain may be due to inadequate heel cushioning.
- Irritation or a burning sensation under the toes may be due to poor cushioning in the ball of the foot or because the toe box is too narrow.
- Corns, calluses, blisters and bunions can be caused by shoes that are too tight or from pressure points that cause pressure or friction to one area of the foot.
- Stress fractures may be a result of poor shock absorbency, poor arch support and inadequate lateral motion control.
- Pain in the arches or plantar fasciitis may be caused by inadequate arch support.
- Shin splints, knee pain, back pain and Achilles tendinitis.
- Shoes that aren't long enough can cause blackened toenails or painful toes.

Get the most from your shoes! To give your exercise shoes a longer life:

- Air them out after each use
- Wear them only for the activity that they are designed for (not for street wear)
- Replace the insoles occasionally
- If possible, rotate between two pairs of shoes.

The average athletic shoe will continue to provide a good fit, adequate shock absorbency and stability for about 6 months to a year or 100 hours. The shoes may retain a new look but the benefits may deteriorate with extended use.

Keep an exercise journal or write the date you started wearing the shoes on the sole of one or both shoes. These suggestions will help you keep track of how often you need to replace your shoes.

Answers:

1. T, 2. T, 3. F - cushioning absorbs impact, 4. F, 5. T, 6. F - athletic shoes are designed for specific activities, 7. T, 8. T, 9. T, 10. T

