

Fit Facts™

FROM THE AMERICAN COUNCIL ON EXERCISE®

SNEAKER SAVVY

If you've tried to buy a pair of athletic shoes recently, you probably realize that the canvas sneakers of the past have been replaced by high-tech, state-of-the-art athletic gear of the present and future. Consumers are faced with so many options that the task of choosing a pair of shoes has become increasingly complicated and confusing, not to mention expensive. By attaining a good working knowledge of athletic footwear, you will be less likely to fall for the latest gimmick or be coerced into spending above your budget.

KNOW WHAT YOU NEED

When shopping for athletic shoes, the most important step is deciding what sport you will be using them for. Most sporting goods stores carry a variety of shoes for activities such as running, walking, tennis, basketball and aerobics. Multi-purpose shoes such as cross trainers may be a good alternative for those who want to combine several sports or activities, such as bicycling and weight training, in a single workout.

Once you have decided on the particular type of shoe you need, it is important to know how to get a good fit. Remember, no matter how popular a shoe is or how good it may look, it won't do you any good if you have blisters after the first week of wearing it.

GUIDELINES FOR BUYING SHOES

When purchasing shoes for a specific sport or fitness activity, you must consider your foot type. People with high-arched feet tend to require greater shock absorption than those with average feet. High-arched (cavus) feet also suffer from lateral

instability and are more prone to ankle sprains. Conversely, people with low-arched ("flat") feet require shoes with less cushioning but greater support and heel control.

After considering the type of shoe needed for a particular activity and evaluating your needs based on your foot type, use the following information to ensure you get the best fit:



- 1 Choose an athletic-shoe store or specialty store with a large inventory. They will have a variety of sizes available.
- 2 Try to get fitted for footwear at the end of the day, when foot size is at its maximum. It is not unusual for an individual's foot to increase one-half a shoe size during the course of a single day.
- 3 Allow 1/2 inch, or the width of your index finger, between the end of your longest toe and the end of the shoe. If one foot is larger than the other, buy the larger size.
- 4 The shoe should be as wide as possible across the forefoot without allowing slippage in the heel. If the shoe has

variable-width lacing, experiment with the narrow and wide eyelets to achieve a custom fit.

SOME FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Athletic shoes no longer require a breaking-in period. However, they will lose their cushioning after three to six months of regular use. It is important to be aware of when your shoes need to be replaced because, if they are no longer absorbing the pounding and jarring action of the sport, you are more likely to sustain knee and ankle injuries.

A final consideration when buying athletic shoes is price. It is possible to spend anywhere from \$19.99 for no-name brands to more than \$170 for Reebok's or Nike's latest technological wonder. Be sure to consider both your budget and your fitness needs before spending a small fortune on shoes.

Finally, though purchasing may be a big investment, it is not a long-term one. If you spend a fortune on the latest style today, a new style will probably replace it tomorrow. It would be more practical, unless you are at a competitive level, to spend a reasonable amount and get the most for your money.

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