



## Find out more

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Produced by Norfolk Community Health and Care NHS Trust  
For review September 2018



# Choosing footwear

## Information for patients

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## Introduction

Shoes play an important part in the health of your feet. If your feet hurt some of the problems may be sorted out by changing your shoes. Unsuitable shoes or shoes that don't fit properly are the most common cause of foot problems.

Common problems caused or made worse by ill-fitting footwear are corns on the tops of your toes, sore bunions, hard skin, painful soles and ingrowing toenails.

Over time your feet change in width, length and depth. To make sure that you have a perfect fit, have your feet measured every time you buy new shoes. Always try on both shoes. It is best to go to the store to get shoes yourself and not ask somebody else to buy your shoes for you.

The style of your shoe is much more important than the price or make. Learning to look for suitable shoes is a skill that takes time to perfect. The following information gives advice about what to think about when buying new shoes.

## Fastening

Wearing shoes without a proper fastening means that you curl your toes to hold the shoes on. Good shoes should have support around the heel and over the top of your foot, preferably with a lace up, Velcro strap or T-bar straps. Avoid slip on styles.

If possible the uppers (tops) of your shoes should be made from a natural material, such as soft leather.

Check shoes regularly for signs of wear and tear, such as rough edges in seams or linings, and worn soles or heels. Replace if needed.

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## Make sure that your toes have enough space

### Length from heel to toe

Your toes should not touch the end of your shoe as this can cause damage to the nails, corns or hard skin to the end of your toes.

### Width across the ball of your foot

Go for a round or square-toed shoe, as these tend to give you more space for your toes. This is especially important if you have bunions or hard skin on you little toes.

### Depth – toes and instep

It is easy to forget to look at the depth of the shoe. You should be able to wriggle your toes up and down inside your shoe. Getting the right depth of shoe is important if you have clawed or hammer toes, as corns and hard skin can form on the tops of your toes.

Heels should be kept low and broad (approximately the width of the shoe). This gives you extra stability and prevents pressure building up over the balls of the feet. By wearing low, broad heels you are less likely to sprain your ankle.

Soles should be soft flexible and cushioned to provide maximum shock absorption. Spongy soles mean your feet will be more comfortable.

### Remember

- Fit the shoe to your foot, not your foot to the shoe.
- Make sure you wear a shoe that is right for what you are doing.