

SELECTING WALKING SHOES

People are always asking for shoe recommendations. I don't like to make specific shoe recommendations because everyone's foot is different and people have different walking styles. But there are a few basics for selecting walking shoes:

- 1) Look for a low, supportive heel that rounds (or bevels) in. A thick heel or one that flairs out (like many running shoes) will cause your foot to slap down rather than roll. This slows down forward momentum and increases the occurrence of sore shins.
- 2) A walker's foot hits heel first and then rolls gradually from heel-to-toe. So, you will need a flexible sole and more bend in the toe than a runner. You should be able to twist and bend the toe area.
- 3) Next, look for a shoe that is light weight and breathable. The last thing you want is the clunky heavy leather walking shoe.
- 4) The most important thing of course is a shoe that fits properly. Be sure your foot has enough room in the toe box. There should be a thumbnails width (or about a half inch) between your toes and the end of the shoe. The shoe should be wide enough in the toe that your toes can move freely. Your heel should not slip, and the shoe should not pinch or bind, especially across the arch or ball of your foot.
- 5) Go shoe shopping at the end of the day or after your walk when your feet may be slightly swollen. Also be sure to wear the same socks you will be wearing during your walks. This can make a huge difference in how the shoe fits. Try on both shoes. Your feet may not be the same size (really!).
- 6) Do not shop when you are in a hurry. Be sure to walk around the store for a few minutes on a hard surface. If the store has an objection to this, find another store. It is worth the effort to find the right shoe for you and it is worth spending a few extra dollars.
- 7) Wear your shoes in the house for a few days to try them out. Don't venture outdoors until you are sure the shoes are going to work for you. (If the shoes are not going to work out you will want to exchange them before scuffing them up outside.)
- 8) Keep track of how many miles you have put on your shoes, and replace them every 300 to 600 miles. To extend the life of your shoes be sure to only wear them only for your walks. Also rotating two pair of shoes will give them time to "bounce back" between walks.

Keep these items in mind when purchasing your next walking shoes. Your feet and legs will thank you for it.