



## Shoes & Shoe Modifications

**Your shoes and socks need to be as comfortable, supportive, and as accommodating as possible.**

*This handout is for the general public and diabetics whose condition is not severe enough for their health insurance to pay for their shoes and/or orthotics.*

*It includes a reference to related handouts on p.2 & various addendums starting on p.3.*

**You often need to know the true shape and size of your feet, and sometimes also the shape of your arches, before you go shoe-shopping.** If you are mostly sedentary, a relaxed comfortable shoe with a comfortable insole may be all you need.

**Make your own foot templates:** Place both bare feet standing on thick paper. Have somebody trace the outside of your feet; cut along the lines; and label them left & right.

**You should never buy shoes that are smaller than your foot templates:** Instead, allow extra space for the shoe seams and also for the feet. Do not buy a shoe that isn't comfortable right away. Your feet can't change the shape of the shoes; but the shoes can change the shape of your feet.

**Do both of your feet or just one swell up:** It is important that your swollen foot/feet have enough room in your shoes. You may end up needing two pairs with different sizes.

**Bunions; hammertoes; overlapping toes; lack of cushioning fat-padding on the forefoot; and protruding bones are additional considerations:**

- High-toe-box shoes provide extra space in the front.
- A softer and more stretchy shoe material will lessen the pressure; possibly a tennis shoe with flexible material. An "X" can also be cut through the shoe material in the pressure areas to provide more space. (Have somebody help you.)
- Some sandals with adjustable straps provide a good fit. Make sure that the straps and/or edges do not cut into or irritate your skin. Open shoes may not be ideal for people who need to protect their skin and nails from injuries.
- You can use over-the-counter (OTC) cushioning products/items to "cushion" or "off-load" the pressure areas. The difference is that "cushioning" is a soft item over or between the pressure area(-s); "off-loading" is an adhesive cover beyond the pressure area where a hole in the middle prevents direct pressure to the pressure area. Some orthotics are able to make accommodations for pressure areas.
- A surgical alternative is to see a podiatrist who can reduce a bunion; straighten out a hammertoe; remove the affected toe, and other procedures.

**The reason for knowing if you have a normal arch, a high arch, or a flat arch is evident when you are looking for a comfortable shoe that meets as many of your personal needs as possible. *Sometimes there is no shoe-insole for your arch!***



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**You can include an image of your arches on your foot templates.**

**Rub cooking oil** (or something else that will make an image on the paper) over the entire soles of your feet before you stand. *The arch is located along the side of the foot facing the mid-line of your body, between the heel and the forefoot. The more oil you see in that area, the flatter the arch; the less oil you see, the higher the arch.* (Precaution: The paper you stand on should be on a hard floor with plastic underneath. Get assistance with keeping your balance and cleaning away the oil afterward.)

**High arches** will need supportive, soft, flexible and light-weight insoles. If you cannot find shoes like that at the shoe store, you can try to buy such insoles on your own.

**A completely flattened arch** is seen in an over-pronated foot when weight-bearing. The affected ankle will also turn inward when weight-bearing. ***The chance that the insole in a regular shoe has the perfect fit to correct over-pronation is small.***

*It is important to mention the over-pronated foot with the flattened arch here because of all the damage it can do, if left untreated, such as structural changes to the foot, like bunions and hammer-toes, as well as joint pain in the ankle, knee, hip, and lower back. Plantar fasciitis with its sharp heel pain is often the first related problem to be noticed.*

A custom-made orthotic done with a plaster cast of your neutral arch is the surest way to correct the over-pronation and flattened arch. Find shoes that meet your over-all needs and have a comfortable arch for the other foot, and then get the orthotic; or visa versa.

**If your arch is only somewhat flattened,** shoes with good supportive insole might do for the time being. You can probably wear them on both feet.

**If you were born with flat arches,** only wear shoes with a flat insole.

**If one leg is longer than the other,** the shoes can be modified.

**Make sure that your socks are not too tight where they end on the leg.** Too much tightness will create an indentation in the skin where the socks end. This can increase swelling of interstitial fluid above the tight upper band of the socks and possibly make it difficult for oxygen to enter the muscle tissues. Cut a vertical slit in the upper band of the socks if you cannot find socks that fit. You can also turn the socks inside-out to prevent pressure from the seam by the toes; and you can use a cotton-blend sock for dryer feet.

See the handouts on ***\*The Structure of your Feet, \*Insoles, Orthotics, and Custom-Made Orthotics, \*Corns, Calluses, Hammer-toes, & Bunions, \*Cushioning Items, and \*Compression Stockings.***

**Additional addendums will follow: \*Information on ways to tie shoes; \*Shoe and sock models and vendors; \*List of businesses that make orthopedic changes to shoes.**