
Florida Podiatric Medical Association



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Back-to-School Shoe Shopping Tips

TALLAHASSEE – Summer vacation has ended and kids are beginning a new school year. One of the most important back-to-school purchases a parent can make is a good pair of shoes. Although this may seem like an easy purchase, there are several important factors to keep in mind:

- **Children’s feet change with age.** Shoe size may change every few months as a child’s feet grow, so you may have to make additional shoe purchases during the school year.
- **Shoes that don’t fit properly can aggravate the feet.** ALWAYS measure a child’s feet before buying shoes, and make sure the shoes fit comfortably. Shoe heels should be firm and toes flexible.
- **Know the proper way to measure your child’s feet.** Dr. Maria Noll, President of the Florida Podiatric Medical Association, reminds parents that there are actually THREE different measurements of the foot. The most common measurements are heel to toe and width. The measurement that is often overlooked, but can be the cause of discomfort, is the heel to ball of foot length. When the foot is growing, this length may not correlate to the heel to toe measurement. If proper measurements are not taken, this can lead to the foot bending at a different point than the shoe.
- **Never hand down footwear.** Just because a pair of shoes fits one child comfortably, doesn’t mean it will fit another child the same way. Also keep in mind that sharing shoes can spread fungi, like athlete’s foot and nail fungus.
- **Examine the heels.** Children may wear out the heels of a pair of shoes quicker than actually outgrowing them. Uneven heel wear may also indicate a foot problem that should be checked out by a podiatric physician.
- **Watch for signs of irritation.** If your child is constantly removing one or both shoes, chances are they don’t fit properly.
- **Take your child with you when shopping for shoes.** Every shoe style fits differently. It is best to let your child have a say in the shoe buying process because it promotes healthy foot habits down the road.
- **Always buy for the larger foot.** Most feet are not exactly the same size.

- **Shop for shoes later in the day.** Feet tend to swell during the day, so it is best to try on shoes while the child's feet are the size they will realistically be.
- **Buy shoes that do not need a “break-in” period.** Shoes should fit comfortably from the start. It is also important to have your child try on shoes with socks or tights, if that is how they will be worn.
- **Purchase sport-specific shoes.** If your child will be participating in sports activities, make sure that the shoes they wear are made for each specific activity and that they fit properly.

Kids are busy and have enough to think about during the school year; they shouldn't be sidelined by foot pain. A podiatric physician can help keep your child moving pain-free, so if your child experiences foot pain of any kind, make an appointment and get the problem checked out!

For more information, contact the FPMA at (850) 224-4085.

The FPMA is a Tallahassee-based, statewide, professional association representing podiatric physicians in Florida. Founded in 1927 for the purpose of advancing the science and art of Podiatric Medicine, the FPMA is dedicated to promoting the importance of podiatric healthcare among the general public and healthcare professionals throughout the state of Florida. The FPMA currently has over 900 members and represents 70% of the active, licensed podiatric physicians in Florida.

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