

Which Athletic Shoe Should I Buy?

Buying an athletic shoe involves multiple considerations. The activities that will be performed, the construction of the shoe, what surfaces you will be on and the type of foot you have are all factors in determining which shoe is right for you. It is important to consider all these aspects to avoid ankle and foot pain or injury.

It is important to wear proper footwear to avoid injury. Each sport or activity involves different movements or jumping and shoes are designed to fit the activity. Running, for instance, primarily involves movement in a straight line. Basketball and aerobics involve jumping and time spent on the forefoot. For example, playing tennis which involves side to side movements in a shoe with supports for straight movement could result in an ankle sprain. In addition, if you are involved in weight training activities for the lower extremities, wear different shoes than you use for impact sports. The extra weight from training compresses the cushioning and affects the shock absorption of the shoe. Cross trainers should only be used for short distance running. (Less than two miles) Some activities are similar so it may not be necessary to buy different shoes for each activity.

Uneven surfaces may cause increased movement in the foot and ankle. This makes the ankle joint and the foot more vulnerable to injury. For example, running on rough terrain calls for an

athletic shoe that is wider. This increases medial and lateral stability decreasing the risk for ankle injury.

It is important to evaluate shoe construction prior to making a purchase. Bend the shoe from toe to heel. It should not bend in places that your foot does not. In addition, if you push it down, it should not rock. Place the shoes down and look at them from behind to assure the shoes are symmetrical. You should also check wear patterns because this will tell you when to buy a new shoe.

There are endless varieties of foot types. Conceptually, there are two basic types, pronators and supinators. General findings for the pronator type foot are: limited big toe mobility, a heel that appears to turn to out and the inner border appears to flatten when stepping. This type of foot requires a "motion control" athletic shoe. These shoes have firmer heels and a straight seam down the middle of the sole. General findings for the supinator type foot are: high and rigid arches and a heel that turns to the inside. This type of foot requires a shoe with more cushioning especially if you plan on using it for running. The sole of the shoe usually has a curved seam down the middle.

In summary, no two feet are alike even on the same person. However, using basic guidelines, you can reduce the risk of injury.