

# Foot and Ankle Update



## "Selecting and Buying Athletic Shoes"

Matthew E. Mitchell, M.D.

October 2007

### Selecting the Correct Shoe

In general, shoes should be tried on at the end of the day. This is when the foot is largest. Additionally, both left and right shoes need to be trialed since one foot is usually bigger than the other. There are many different types of shoes. The main athletic types are running, cross training, and sport specific. Running shoes are meant for straight ahead activities and

have a more rocker bottom appearance. They also have more heel cushioning. Running shoes should be replaced after 500 miles of running. Cross training shoes have firmer soles and more support along the sides for side-to-side activities. They are not meant for long distance running. Sport specific shoes have cleats for playing sports such as football and soccer. Coaches and trainers can help direct athletes to the specific shoes for their sports.

### Sizing the Shoe

It is important to get a well fitting shoe. This includes getting the right size as well as the correct "balance" in a running shoe. In general, you should be able to "wiggle" your toes in a properly fitted shoe and there should be minimal slippage on the heel. The shoe should fit well in the store and the salesman should not be saying it will "stretch out". The Brannock device used in shoe stores can be used to "balance" the shoe. The heel to ball and heel to toe size on the Brannock device

can be used to select a shoe that flexes at the proper point. If the heel to ball size is larger than the heel to toe size then consideration can be given to getting a larger size. This ensures the flex is in the proper location. Furthermore, excessive pronators may benefit from a "motion control" shoe. This can be determined by observing the athlete's gait and previous athletic shoes. Excessive wear on the inside heel can indicate a runner who pronates. Furthermore, pronators can be accommodated by orthotics with posts on the inside of the foot.

### Conclusion

Correct shoes size is important especially for athletes. Shoe designs have improved to allow more customization. Coaches, trainers, and team physicians should work in tandem to ensure the best athletic shoe is chosen for the individual athlete.



Dr. Mitchell is in practice in Casper Wyoming  
email: [mattmitchell@mattmitchellmd.com](mailto:mattmitchell@mattmitchellmd.com)  
website: [www.mattmitchellmd.com](http://www.mattmitchellmd.com)