

Fitting your child's footwear

It is advised to wait till your child starts walking before buying shoes for them; research suggests that children develop healthy and well-developed feet when they learn to walk barefoot. Also they need to develop the normal sensory stimulation their feet will get from contact with the environment, so it is important to wait. Until then, it is important to keep their feet dry and warm with soft booties or skid-free socks. When the time comes to get shoes for your children it is important to get it right. Correct fitting and comfortable shoes for children will ensure fewer problems associated with poor fitting shoes. When it is time to shop for your children's shoes, it is important to have the salesperson measure both the length and width of your child's feet using a shoe fitting gauge. After picking out an approximate shoe size, have your child try on both of the shoes and walk around. Several of the following tips will assist you in ensure a good fit.

- That there is a thumb's width between then end of the shoe and the end of the longest toe; approximately half an inch for the correct length.
- That you are able to insert a finger under the top of the shoe and pinch the upper part of the shoe between the thumb and the forefinger (depending on the material). This ensures the right depth.
- That the shoe fits snugly around the heel and instep, and the shoe is stable when you try to "pull off" the shoe. Not too tight or too loose.
- That the shoe is flexible across the ball of the foot and doesn't bend where the foot does not (for example in the arch area). Soft leather and materials that are not too stiff are preferable. This ensures a comfortable fit with walking.
- That you look for a pattern or textured sole, as this will provide traction and help prevent your child from easily slipping on slick surfaces.

So pick the shoe that is most to your and your child's liking. Make sure the overall shape is similar to the shape of your child's feet.

Good shoes will keep their feet comfortable at all times and help to avoid any foot problems as they grow.

It is generally advised to have your child's feet measure every three months and to replace their shoes as required.

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