

Shoes for young children

ORTHOPAEDIC FACT SHEET 9

Most children begin to walk from around 12 to 18 months of age. For babies learning to walk, bare feet are best, so babies can feel what they touch with their feet. Soft-soled, non-slip booties are a good way to keep feet warm in cold weather and for protection if walking or crawling on rough surfaces.

Young children do not need to wear shoes until they have been walking on their own for about six weeks, and will need shoes to protect their feet outside. Shoes should fit well, and allow a little room for growth.

What to look for when buying shoes

It is helpful to take your child to an experienced shoe fitter.

- The sole of the shoe should be firm but lightweight and flexible. Check that the sole can bend near the toe (**Figure 2**).
- The front part of the shoe should be wider than the heel. This matches the natural shape of the foot (**Figure 3**).
- Shoes should have a firm heel cup. This means that the shoe or sandal should have a solid back. You should not be able to squeeze the sides of the back of the shoe together.
- Buckles and laces may provide more support than velcro and elastic fasteners, especially for children with very narrow feet.

Remember: Expensive shoes are not always better. Look for shoes with the above features and avoid overspending. Children outgrow their shoes very quickly.



Figure 1. Good shoes for children – what to look for

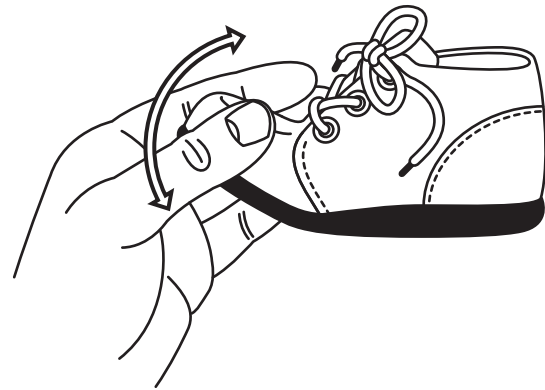


Figure 2. Shoes should be flexible so the foot bends when walking

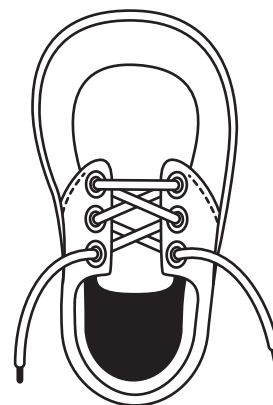


Figure 3. The front of the shoe should be wider than the heel