

## Purchasing Athletic Shoes

Nowadays when purchasing athletic shoes we have both the advantage and confusion of having a wide variety of options. Your feet are the foundation of any athletic activity you participate in, and as such you want your foundation to be as strong and stable as possible. Therefore you should choose wisely and not always let price dictate your decision. A lower price sneaker may seem appealing but in the end may cause more problems. If you are serious about your athletic endeavors then you need to find the best sneaker for what you are doing period. Just recently a client of mine was complaining all the time of knee pain. This person was wearing old worn out sneakers and running in them. I suggested before they see a doctor to buy a new pair of sneakers. Problem solved, not a stitch of pain since. We will discuss tips on how to purchase the right sneakers for what you do.

The first thing you need to determine is what activity or sport will you be participating in. If for instance you intend on seriously running then you need to seek out a running shoe only. The same applies for tennis, basketball, hiking, walking, bowling etc. If you are not committed to a particular sport and will be doing a lot of different activities then a cross trainer should suit you fine. Athletic shoes are tested and designed to be sport specific. Such items as the arch, material, amount of cushion and biomechanics of the human body are all considered when a sneaker manufacturer designs an athletic shoe. Individuals with high arches will need more shock absorbency than those with average arches. On the other hand those with lower arches tend to require less cushioning and more support.

Once you have determined the kind of sneaker you want to purchase you need to next consider the fit. Your feet tend to swell during the day and are at their largest in the afternoon and early evening. Therefore it is best to purchase your sneakers during this time. Your foot can increase as much as one half-foot size during any given day.

Allow  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch or the width of your index finger in distance between the top of your toe and the tip of the sneaker. If you are borderline between two sizes you generally want to choose the larger size. As far as width you want as much as possible across the foot without risking your heel slipping around. Some shoes offer variable width lacing which allows you an opportunity for a custom fit. In the shoe store you may want to do more than just walk around. Jumping in place or some light squats may reveal more about the shoe than lightly walking around the store. Keep in mind also that some brands tend to run narrower than others. Therefore a size 11 in a Reebok sneaker may be a size 11.5 in a Nike.

Where you buy your shoes is important as well. Sadly from my personal experience most sneaker stores staff themselves with individuals who are not very well informed and are often not capable of assisting you in making a wise purchase. Go to a place where the staff is well informed and can competently and intelligently answer your questions. This may take some searching around

but such places and people do exist.

How often you purchase new sneakers depends entirely on how often you use them. As a general rule, if you are exercising three times a week or more, you will want to make a purchase probably twice a year or every 6 months. Diligent runners will want to have two pair of sneakers on hand and alternate them every one or two runs. What happens when you use your sneakers often is the fiber in the cushion will become compressed. The more compressed it becomes the less cushion and support the shoe offers. Eventually sneakers will become so compressed they offer so little cushion and support that you now risk injury.

Lastly you need to consider price. Sneakers nowadays can cost up to \$150.00 per pair. Unfortunately at that price you are paying for the latest gimmick by the most popular name. You need to really evaluate your needs and purchase accordingly. Do not purchase knock around sneakers for \$19.99 if you intend on seriously exercising. On the other hand you do not need to spend \$150.00 on useless gimmicks and technology either.