

WALKING: THE SHOE MATTERS

Walking is one of the easiest exercises that you can do in an effort to become fit. Often, as you go to the doctor, they recommend “exercise.” Walking is one the most inexpensive ways of trying to incorporate exercise into your daily life, and walking can be done anywhere at any time. The benefits of daily walking have been well documented, and walking has been shown to provide significant results for people of all ages. It has been shown to reduce the risk of Type II Diabetes by up to 58%, reduce the risk stroke by up to 46%, reduce the risk of breast cancer by 20% and reduce the risk of pancreatic cancer. Exercise and walking are also beneficial in decreasing the risk of depression. These benefits have been shown by walking at least 30 minutes each day.

Many people begin a walking program based on a suggestion from their doctors or friends; however, many have difficulty maintaining a consistent schedule or begin to experience new aches and pains. One common complaint among individuals that begin a new walking program is foot pain. Foot and ankle pain can be caused by a number of factors. The structure of your foot could be a contributing factor to this ailment. Some individuals have very flat feet, and may overpronate as they walk. Others have high arches, which leads to increased supination. Both of these may lead to increased stress over the bottom of the foot. The two most common complaints among individuals that begin to experience pain are pain in the arch or pain in the front of the shin bone.

If beginning a new walking program, it is important to examine the type of shoes you wear as well as have an understanding of your foot type. Proper shoe wear is key in preventing foot and leg pain. All shoes are not created equal; you should consider that the shoe is your primary equipment when beginning a walking program. There is a difference between both walking shoes and running shoes, and in many cases, running shoes can be more supportive than walking shoes. Remember that the insole of the shoe should match the arch of your foot; the sole should provide adequate cushioning for your specific foot type. Also, the proper shoe should bend at the forefoot, not at the midfoot to give you adequate support. The heel of the shoe should provide you with good shock absorption.

Remember that walking has many documented benefits. To ensure you continue with your walking program to prevent foot, ankle, and leg pain, be sure to talk with a qualified professional to determine your foot type and to help you in choosing the right shoe for you. This could be the difference in successfully getting fit by walking!

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