

For the past six months, I have been involved in something that I have always dreaded: long distance running. Being a former professional football player, most of my training consisted of short sprints lasting no longer than a few seconds. The longest distance I had ever run was a lap or two around the Minoru Oval to warm up. In 2 weeks time I will be running in the Vancouver Marathon, subjecting myself to (if all goes well) approximately 3 ½ hours of continuous running, covering a little more than 42 kilometres.

Throughout my training, I've appreciated the importance of proper footwear. Lack of proper foot care and ill-fitting shoes are responsible for a variety of sports injuries. Your feet have a direct impact on the rest of your body and support you with each stride. A small abnormality in your feet can have a tremendous impact on joints higher up in the body, causing dysfunction and injury.

When you are running, the pressure on your feet is three to four times your body weight. The average person takes about 10,000 steps a day. Over the course of a lifetime, that is close to 200,000 kilometres! To put that in perspective, that is approximately four times around the earth.

If you are active, it is important that you select the right running shoe for your foot type. Many people buy running shoes that do not properly fit their feet and that tend to aggravate foot ailments. Below are some tips, from the Running Room, to help you when purchasing your running shoes:

1. **Spend Time.**
Walk and run in the shoe. Don't buy shoes because they worked well for someone else. Test them out.
2. **Take along your Old Shoes.**
Most knowledgeable shoe store staff (like the Running Room) can "read" your wear pattern, and it is important to be fitted with the same sock you will run in and any insoles or custom orthotics you may own.
3. **Inform the Shoe Store Staff.**
About your running history, goals, past injuries, the type of training you do, and what has or hasn't worked for you in the past.
4. **Obtain a Foot Exam.**
Whether you have a rigid or flexible foot, a low or high arch, or are flat-footed makes a difference as to what will best suit you.
5. **Comfort.**
Pressure spots or loose-fitting shoes will be susceptible to blisters. If your foot slides excessively, you will also lose energy on the push off.
6. **A Snug Fit.**
Pull the laces so that you have a feeling of security without discomfort.
7. **Selecting the Right "Last" (Footbed Construction)**
All shoes are constructed over a wood or composite called a "last." The three predominant shapes today are the "straight," "curved" and the "semi-curved." If you have a curved foot and wear a straight shoe, you will feel pressure on the inside of your big toe, and you will tend to roll off the outside of the shoe.
8. **The Selection Process.**
Select two or three models that work best for your foot function. Compare the fit of each and then stand, walk around, and run in each shoe to feel how it performs. You will find your new shoes choose you.
9. **Running in Cross Trainers or Aerobic Shoes?**
Running shoes are designed for a forward motion and cushion the impact specific to running. Cross trainers and Aerobic shoes are designed for more lateral support and toe flexibility. If you use them as your running shoes, you'll risk injury.
10. **When to Buy a New Pair**
Often, a shoe's upper is still in great shape, but the cushioning and motion control has been lost. The key to keeping off the injury list is to replace your shoes once they begin to wear or break down (after approximately 800km).

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