



Flip-Flops Have Health Risks

Walking in flip-flops can cause aches and pains all over the body, as reported in a new study from the American College of Sports Medicine.

Spring and summer's favorite footwear is responsible for more health problems than any other type of shoe, including high heels, according to the American Podiatric Medical Association (APMA).

Many studies have shown that people change their walking mechanics when they wear flip-flops and other sandals.

Flip-flop wearers take longer to walk from one point to another because they take shorter steps. Thin soles and the need to grasp the shoes onto our feet force us to walk differently.



Abnormal shock absorption to the foot and other places in the body is a common health risk when wearing flip-flops.

In addition, unlike sturdy shoes, flip-flops are not good for extended walking and vary-

ing terrain because they do not offer arch support, heel cushioning or other shock absorption.

Padded and thick-soled shoes can absorb the impact so it does not travel up your vertical column, but when wearing flip-flops, the shock may be absorbed in other areas like the heel, Achilles tendon, knee, hip, low back, mid-back or neck.

Further, flip-flop wearers can suffer foot pain and tendinitis due to lack of arch support and even sprained ankles if they trip.

Emergency room and immediate care physicians report that foot injuries such as; stubbed toes, glass cuts, puncture wounds, or heavy objects landing on the foot are more likely to occur when the foot is exposed.

Although many medical professionals address the dangers of flip-flops, there is a range of opinions about wearing them. Some professionals recommend not wearing them as often or being more cautious, while others recommend abandoning them completely.

If you're not ready to flip-flop your opinion on wearing the airy spring and summer fashion, then be wise and read the APMA's *Flip-Flop Quick Tips* to the right.

Flip-Flop Quick Tips

Do

Do look for a high quality flip-flop made of soft leather.

Do gently bend the flip-flop from end to end. It should bend naturally at the ball of the foot. Shoes should not bend in half.

Do ensure that your foot doesn't hang off the edge of the flip-flop.

Don't

Don't wear the same flip-flops year after year. Inspect older flip-flops for signs of wear. Worn soles mean it's time for them to go.

Don't ignore irritation where the flip-flop fits between your toes. It can lead to blisters or more painful irritation.

Don't wear flip-flops for long-distance walking. They do not offer enough arch support or shock absorption for heavy duty walking.

Don't sport flip-flops for yard-work. You want your feet to be protected while mowing the lawn or trimming weeds.

Don't play sports in flip-flops. It's easy to twist your ankle, leading to ankle sprains and/or fractures.

If the Shoe Fits... Run with It

Select a Good Running Shoe

Selecting a good running shoe is important if you want to avoid injuries, aches, pains, and lost running time. Runners should choose a shoe based on their foot type. Feet are classified into three categories: low arch, normal arch, and high arch (see graphic below). Quality running shoes are designed specifically for each of these foot types.

Foot Assessments

A foot assessment—either in standing (static) or while moving (dynamic)— can be performed to determine a more accurate shoe selection. These assessments are recommended for runners and everyone who has a low or high arch.

In order to match a shoe to your feet, you should have a professional check your feet. A shoe specialist (found at stores that deal exclusively in athletic shoes), physical therapist or podiatrist can recommend a shoe type after dynamically assessing your feet.

When you visit a professional for a foot assessment, there are a couple items you should bring with you; (1) old running shoes so they can look at your wearing pattern, and (2) athletic socks and/or orthotics to assist with determining the proper fit.







Foot Type	Alignment	Shoe Type
 High Arch	 Supination	Cushioning Shoe
 Normal Arch	 Neutral	Stability Shoe
 Flat Foot	 Pronation	Motion Control Shoe

Image obtained from www.injuredrunner.com

Shoe Classifications

- **Motion control** shoes have a straight shape, the mid-sole is usually two colors and two types of material, and the heel is rigid (low arch)
- **Stability** shoes have a semi-curved shape, the mid-sole is usually two colors and two types of material, and the heel is sturdy (normal arch)
- **Cushioned** shoes have a curved shape, the mid-sole is one color, and the heel is softer and flexible (high arch)



Additional Tips for Shoe Selection

There are a few additional tips when buying a running shoe. Shop for shoes in the afternoon because feet are larger due to swelling. You should change shoes every 350-500 miles. Running shoes are pricy, and you should expect to pay between \$70-\$120 or more for quality running shoes. Although good running shoes can be relatively expensive, proper shoe selection will help you avoid painful overuse injuries.

Discount shoes do not offer the same support and protection as high quality shoes. Because they are not as good for your feet and general health, you may need to spend a little extra to get the support you need. Generally, shoes with a superior shock absorption and arch support system cost \$80 or more.

You may be able to purchase less expensive shoes if you are wearing running or athletic shoes for walking and not for high impact activities. Cushioning, stability and motion control shoes are available in a range of prices and quality. Remember when you are shopping for athletic shoes, the way to prevent overuse injuries, aches and pains is to choose the right shoe for your feet.

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