



“...Most of us attribute how our feet feel to the brand or the quality of shoes we wear...”



Dr. Don Miller, PT, DPT, MS, CSCS, is the owner of Cleveland Physical Therapy Associates & Prescription Fitness with clinics in Shelby and Boiling Springs, NC. He has practiced as a Physical Therapist and a Nationally Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist for over 21 years. Before opening a practice in Shelby, Dr. Miller worked as a physical therapist and strength and conditioning consultant with several professional teams.

Foot Pain?

YOU MIGHT BE IN THE WRONG SHOE

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The shoe salesperson boasts that the new athletic shoes he is trying to sell you are the best on the market; incidentally, they are also the most expensive. You are very excited by the promises made about the shoes, only to be disappointed after you purchase them because your feet are killing you by the end of the day. “Oh well” you say, “I guess I just need to break them in!” In this case, persistence doesn’t pay off and after a few weeks of trying to “break in” your new shoes, you develop constant foot pain.

The truth is you have a 1 in 3 chance of purchasing the right shoe. Most people do not know that all major athletic shoe companies make three distinct types of shoes for three different types of feet; they are neutral (or cushioning), stability, and motion control. Because they provide the most cushioning and feel better when you first try them on, people often end up buying neutral or stability shoes. Some people need the extra cushioning provided by a neutral shoe and do well. However, if a person has feet that require additional support (which a motion control shoe provides) their feet will begin to hurt and they will be disappointed with neutral shoes.

Most of us attribute how our feet feel to the brand or the quality of shoes we wear. This is true for the width and fit of the shoe, but as mentioned earlier all shoe companies make three types of shoes and each type has a different level of support and cushioning. This explains why your favorite New Balance shoe feels great but another style of New Balance does not.

Unfortunately, most shoe stores do not employ sales people who are very knowledgeable about shoes. In an attempt to improve their ability to fit you with the appropriate shoe, some stores use machines or the “wet foot” method (how high your arch is based on your wet footprint). Although this is helpful, it does not account for movement of the entire foot during weight bearing or for the mechanics at the knee, hip and pelvis during ambulation.

How do you get into the right shoe? A medical professional with training in the evaluation of foot, ankle, knee, hip and pelvic girdle biomechanics during walking and running, can best determine which shoe you need.

Sometimes, though, even the best shoe does not provide enough support. In such cases, the additional support provided by an orthotic may be necessary. An orthotic is a custom made or pre-fabricated shoe insert that is capable of affecting the mechanics of the lower extremity. The orthotic maintains the foot in a position that minimizes abnormal motion through the foot, which improves biomechanics of the foot and lower extremity. Orthotics can be expensive and when an orthotic is required, it is still necessary to wear the appropriate shoes.

With this in mind, before going to the expense of fabricating custom orthotics for our patients, we recommend the appropriate shoes and ask our patients to wear them for a week. Quite often, changing to the right shoe is all that is needed. *

