



IMPORTANCE OF SHOES

Athletic shoes should be considered a piece of equipment and their selection should not be taken lightly. Finding the correct shoe for your gait, activity level, and size is imperative if you want to enable your body to exercise most effectively and safely. Ill-fitting shoes can lead to misalignment in your knees, hips and back. This will cause you unnecessary pain!

Fit

An ideally fit shoe will be snug in the heel and instep (mid foot region) and a bit roomy in the toes. You should be able to spread out your toes in the front of the shoe. Additionally, there should be a half to a full thumb's width from the end of your shoe to your longest toe when standing (when sitting your feet are not at their greatest length). Anything shorter and you risk cramping your feet when you start exercising because as your body heats up and sweats, your feet swell. So a good time to try on shoes is actually after exercising or when you've been on your feet all day.

Shoes Types

One of the main elements we look at when doing gait analysis is the degree of pronation in your feet. Pronation is the normal flattening of the mid-foot during foot strike. Pronation is normal and necessary for proper foot function. However, over-pronation or under-pronation (supination) can be problematic. Pronation can differ from foot to foot. Generally the lower the arch, the greater the pronation and the higher the arch the less pronation. The arch acts as a shock absorber and as women age, have children, or are genetically predisposed to low arches, pronation increases. Posting, which is the corrective double density foam or plastic insert in the shoe, will help guide an excessively pronating foot to the neutral position quicker as it moves through the gait cycle.

Neutral: No corrective post, simply a pillow for the foot. Allows this biomechanically efficient foot to move unhindered. Highest arch of the three types.

Stability: Some posting on the medial side which provides more stability by controlling pronation. Mid to low arches.

Motion Control: The best shoe for excessive pronators. Strong medial post, low to flat arch on the inside so the shoe can support the whole foot. Bottoms of shoes are flat to provide more stability. These shoes are generally a little heavier, built on a straight last

Foot injuries brought on by inadequate or inappropriate shoes can include: plantar fasciitis, knee pain, and shin splints.

Care

A pair of shoes will last between six months to a year, depending on use, or 300-500 miles. Your body will typically tell you when to replace your shoes because your knees and back will start to ache after workouts. Shoes can be cleaned in the washing machine (remove laces and insoles, they can be placed in a mesh lingerie bag) with some mild detergent and then left to air dry. And while it is nice to have clean shoes, don't wash them too often only because it can weaken the construction of the shoe.

Here's to healthy feet!



SPORTS BRA 101

There comes a time when you really need to replace your sports bra. No, really.

I know what's under your workout shirt: an old, yellowing, stretched out racer back sports bra you bought at Ross because your New Year's resolution was to get in shape. Now, three years later you're still wearing that same tired thing. You need to get rid of that bra and here's why.

For women, the two most important pieces of equipment are your shoes and sports bra. You can just as well run in a burlap sack, bike in a nightgown, or go to the gym in your prom dress, but if you don't support your feet and boobs, you'll end up with sore joints and a saggy chest. Here's the awful truth: breasts are composed primarily of fat and connective tissue called Cooper's ligaments. Once these ligaments are stretched out, there's no going back. Any kind of activity, from walking to running to everything in between, will gradually but irreparably stretch out these tissues. Also important to remember is that no matter what size your boobs are, you need support (yes *you*, you A cup girls).

There are three necessary components to an effective sports bra: non-stretching fabric, adjustability, and wicking material. Bras made with non-stretching fabric will do just that: not stretch. Therefore, when you're out bouncing around, you boobs will not stretch with the fabric. You can go ahead and visualize that for a moment. Since many of us are different shapes and sizes, more often than not a simple racer back will not do the trick. Particularly with C cups and above, adjustability both in the shoulder straps and chest band will provide a more customized and comfortable bra. Finding a bra that is made of synthetic material will also wick moisture away from your skin and to the outside of the bra where it can evaporate. This will help keep you drier and prevent unnecessary chafing.

Sports bras will either use compression, encapsulation, or a combination of the two to minimize bounce. Compression is the most widespread method where you're simply holding the girls down. Contrary to popular belief, you're not doomed to the uni-boob with a compression bra. Some manufacturers have engineered bras to keep your breasts relatively separate even in a compression bra. For the C-plus girls, encapsulation can sometimes be the best method. Here, each breast is encapsulated by non-stretching fabric to reduce bounce.

If you've just spent more time reading this than choosing sports bra, it might be time to go into a specialty athletic store and take time to get fitted and try on a few different styles.

And as a final note: your sports bra will last 5-6 months if used regularly, longer if rotated with other bras. It's fine to throw your sports bra in the wash, but *never* put it in the dryer. The high heat from the dryer will dry out the plastics in the synthetic fabric and cause them to degrade faster. Just air dry those babies.

With the right sports bra, I promise, your boobs will thank you.