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Parents: Know How to Buy the Right Shoes for Your Child's Feet

Did you know that your child's feet can grow up to two sizes in six months? You need to account for this rapid growth when buying shoes. Be careful, though, not to simply buy shoes that are too big and assume they'll grow into them – oversized shoes cause the foot to slide forward, putting excessive pressure on the toes. A good fit is about a finger's width from the end of the shoe to the tip of the big toe. Check to see that the toe box flexes easily and that the shoe doesn't bend in the middle of the sole. Don't let your child choose shoes if they already feel tight and uncomfortable in the store – they won't fit any better when you get home.

If you haven't checked your child's shoes recently, now is a good time. Follow these basic instructions to finding the perfect fit for growing feet:

- ▶ *Look for proper cushioning and arch support. Shoes lose their shock absorption over time.*
- ▶ *Wear and tear around the edges of the sole usually means it's worn out and needs to be replaced.*
- ▶ *Shoes that are too tight can cause blisters, corns and calluses on your child's toes, blisters on the back of the heels or ingrown toenails.*
- ▶ *Children with flat feet need shoes with a wide toe box, maximum arch support and shock absorption. The best shoes to buy are oxford, lace-up shoes that have enough depth for an orthotic insert, if necessary.*

The basics of a good fit also apply to athletic shoes. Also, for comfort and injury prevention, children who regularly participate in a sport should wear shoes designed specifically for the demands of that sport. For example, tennis shoes are designed for side-to-side motion. When shopping for a general athletic shoe, cross-trainers are a suitable choice. If specific socks are required as part of a uniform (for example, soccer socks), have your child wear these socks, or ones of the same thickness, to try on the shoes.

If a child is having trouble walking and running, and is experiencing pain despite properly fitting shoes, a check-up with our office could be in order.



Assist Your Diabetic Loved One This Autumn

November is National Diabetes Month, and an excellent reminder that the entire family should be involved with making sure our diabetic loved ones stay healthy.

Here are some ways you can participate in healthy choices and actions with the whole family:

- ▶ *Plan meals carefully. Everyone can benefit from healthful-eating guidelines that your diabetic family member needs to follow.*
- ▶ *Make fitness a part of your day. Taking a walk together is a great way to help the entire family stay in shape, and to help your diabetic family member control blood sugars.*
- ▶ *Feet can get cold on chilly autumn nights, so anyone with diabetes should wear socks to bed if their feet are chilly. They should NEVER use a heating pad or hot water bottle.*
- ▶ *Help your family member check his or her feet. It's not always easy to look at the bottoms of someone's feet, but it's very important. Regular feet-checking can help you catch cuts, blisters, scratches, redness or swelling right at the start, before they become a big problem. So, inspect feet daily, and call our office at the first sign of trouble.*

Enjoy the Fall Colors and Keep Your Feet Safe

Although certain colors are beautiful to look for when hiking in the fall, you don't want to see those colors on your feet and ankles as a result of a fall! Outdoorsy people might not always know the risks of hiking on uneven terrain. Steep hills, slippery surfaces and loose rocks can cause stress to the muscles and tendons in feet and ankles. Avoid problems such as heel pain, ankle sprains and Achilles tendon injuries with these tips:

Use the Right Shoes

Cross-training athletic shoes don't offer the support needed for hiking on uneven, steep and slippery terrain. An investment in strong, well-insulated and moisture-proof hiking boots will lessen the stress on muscles and tendons and reduce risk of injury. Look for shoes with a supportive shank; if a boot bends in the middle, don't buy it!

Easy Does It!

Hiking is like skiing; beginners should take on less difficult trails until they have mastered them, then move on to more difficult ones. Feet need to be in good physical condition to function properly, or else injuries may easily occur. Be sure to stretch your foot and ankle muscles, strengthen them, and do exercises to improve your sense of balance. These will improve your ability to deal with challenging terrain. Don't attempt to take on more than your body is ready for; ease into your hiking routine before planning a long, strenuous trip.

If you are injured, use the R.I.C.E. protocol: Rest, Ice, Compression and Elevation, and seek medical assistance in our office or the closest emergency department.

