

Your child's footwear

This leaflet provides advice to help you make confident choices when buying footwear from high street retailers and explains what to expect if your child is referred for specialist footwear.

Why good footwear matters

Children's feet grow quickly and change shape over time. Well-fitting shoes help their feet develop naturally, support movement, and reduce the risk of long-term problems.

Getting the right fit

You should have your child's feet measured regularly by a qualified professional at a reputable store. Both feet should be measured for length, width and circumference, as they may differ slightly. A well-fitting shoe allows the foot to grow and develop naturally. It helps prevent discomfort, supports movement, and reduces the risk of long-term issues.

What to look for when choosing shoes

- The toe area should be wide and deep enough to allow the toes to move slightly. Shoes that squash the toes can cause problems with foot development.
- Shoes should support the foot, especially around the heel. If the shoe twists easily, it's too flexible and won't offer enough support.
- Choose shoes with secure fastenings such as laces, Velcro™ or buckles. These help keep the heel in place during movement. Slip-on styles should be avoided.
- Look for a heel with a broad base made from shock-absorbing material. Natural materials like leather are ideal. Heel height should be no more than 1.5cm.

Styles to avoid

Some styles do not offer enough support and are best avoided. These include:

- ballet-style flats, slip-ons and shoes with very thin soles
- high heels, which can cause the foot to slide forward and increase pressure on the forefoot
- soft sheepskin boots, rubber clogs, open sandals and jelly shoes

Checking the fit

When your child tries on their shoes, it's worth checking a few things to make sure they're comfortable and supportive:

- Make sure both shoes are worn and fastened properly, with your child standing evenly on both feet. If they use insoles, these should be in place before checking the fit.
- There should be at least 6mm, ideally 10mm, of space in front of the longest toe.
- The shoe's shape should follow the foot without being distorted.
- The material should ripple slightly when pressed but not crease deeply.
- The shoe should sit neatly around the ankle and heel, without pressing on bony areas.
- Fastenings should feel secure but not overstretched.

- While walking, the shoe should grip the foot, the sole should bend naturally at the front, and the heel should feel stable.
- The upper material should move with the foot and return to shape.
- Your child shouldn't feel any pinching or pressure.

Wearing new footwear

All new shoes should be worn in gradually, even if they haven't been specially prescribed. This helps your child's feet adapt and allows the shoe materials to soften for a better fit.

If your child needs specialist footwear

If your child's healthcare professional recommends specialist footwear, they may refer you to the paediatric orthotics clinic. An orthotist will assess your child's feet and take measurements to understand what support is needed. If specialist footwear is recommended, it will be carefully fitted to make sure it's comfortable and supportive. If it's not needed, your child may be discharged from the service. Your physiotherapist will guide you on continuing with physiotherapy and choosing suitable high-street shoes.

Types of footwear provided

Children under school age are usually provided with 1 pair of footwear. Once they reach school age, they may be eligible for 2 pairs (a black pair for school, and one for home or weekend use). We're not able to fund sandals for children. We only provide footwear that offers the right support and structure for year-round use. If you'd like your child to wear sandals, you're welcome to purchase these privately.

If your child's school has a strict uniform policy relating to footwear, please ask their teacher to contact us for a letter to request exemption, or share this leaflet with them.

Review appointments

Your child will be reviewed regularly by their physiotherapist. If they have a growth spurt or you're concerned about the fit, contact the orthotics department to arrange a review.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's footwear, please contact the orthotics service that their appointment is with.

If your child is a patient at **Bowley Close regional rehabilitation centre, Sunshine House**, or **Mary Sheridan Centre** **phone** 020 3039 7776 or **email** gstt.gsttorthoticreferrals@nhs.net

If your child is a patient at **King's College Hospital** **phone** 020 3299 3646, **email** gstt.orthoticreferral@nhs.net

Your appointment letter will tell you who your appointment is with, and where to go for your child's appointment.

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