

Finding the Right Fit: Orthopedic Shoes

By Julia Schwarz

Finding the perfect pair of shoes is difficult for anyone. There are many considerations, including style, color, comfort, and the latest trends. Mobility difficulties after stroke can make the decision even harder. The shoes that you might have once enjoyed wearing may be difficult to get on, or do not provide the support you now need. Orthopedic shoes are often recommended to people with difficulty walking after a stroke. These shoes are custom made and can improve stability, reduce foot drag, and are made to accommodate any changes in your feet that may have happened after the stroke.

Will they really help me?

Custom made shoes are often thought of as reserved for elite athletes whose signature shoes allow them to perform at the highest levels of competition. However, while you might not be going to the Olympics, you should think of orthopedic shoes as allowing you to perform at your highest level. A recent study found that 90% of people recovering from stroke who wore orthopedic shoes reported improved walking distance, self-confidence, and safety [\(1\)](#).

How long do I need to wear them for?

It is up to you on how long you wear your orthopedic shoes for, and this is an important discussion to have with a medical professional. In studies that were done to evaluate patients' satisfaction with their orthopedic shoes, people who were satisfied with their orthopedic shoes at 3 months were still wearing them regularly 1.5 years after their stroke [\(2\)](#).

What if I am unhappy with my orthopedic shoes?

One of the major reasons people stop wearing their orthopedic shoes is because they are unhappy with a certain aspect of their shoe. Communicating your problem with the shoes to both the medical professional and shoe technician who helped you design them is essential. Appearance and weight of the shoes are two major complaints that people have about their orthopedic shoes. Voice these concerns and see if your shoe technician can resolve these

problems. The shoes are only helpful if worn, so it is essential to get a shoe you will want to wear.

Where can I get orthopedic shoes?

Plenty of companies offer orthopedic shoes that can specifically help you after a stroke. While many of these companies make great products, the most important part of an orthopedic shoe is that it is made with your needs in mind. Ask your doctor or physical therapist if there is a shoe specialist who you can see for a consultation.

Sources

1. M. Kerzoncuf et al., Satisfaction and long-term use of orthopedic shoes in people with chronic stroke. Ann Phys Rehabil Med 61, 180-182 (2018).
2. J. J. van Netten, M. J. Jannink, J. M. Hijmans, J. H. Geertzen, K. Postema, Long-term use of custom-made orthopedic shoes: 1.5-year follow-up study. J Rehabil Res Dev 47, 643-649 (2010).