

How to buy good running shoes for your child

Reviewed by SickKids Staff | Last updated: March 13th 2013

Find out what makes a good running shoe and how to find the right fit for your child.

Key points

- A good running shoe offers arch support, a shock absorbing sole and firm heel support. It is also easy to fasten securely.
- When choosing shoes, have your child's feet measured for width as well as length.
- Have your child try on several pairs of shoes to find the pair that best fits the shape of their foot. Have them wear suitable socks and bring along any shoe inserts they usually need.

Your child's first pair of shoes is a major milestone for them, and for you. But when it comes to running shoes, how much attention do you or your child pay to comfort and support rather than colour and style?

If, like many kids, your child will be spending most of the day in their running shoes - and wearing them out before you know it – it is worth taking the time to buy the right type.

Proper footwear is key to supporting your child's joints and body as they run around and play sports.



What to look for in a good running shoe

Generally speaking, a good running shoe is one that has:

- a shock-absorbing sole
- a supportive arch

- firm heel support
- a reasonably flexible forefoot (the part of the shoe surrounding the arch, ball of the foot and toes)

You or your child should also be able to fasten the shoe securely. Shoes that lace up or fasten with Velcro provide more support than those that slip on.

Tips for buying running shoes

- When you go to the store, have your child's feet measured for width as well as length.
- Try to find shoes that are available in different lengths and widths. The important thing is to choose a shoe that best fits your child's foot shape.
- Shoe sizes are not standard. Your child might wear one size of running shoe in one brand and another size in a different brand. Go by how the shoe feels for your child, not the size number. Have your child try on several pairs.
- Try to copy the conditions in which your child would usually wear the running shoes. For instance, when trying on the shoes, have your child wear the socks they would usually wear while running around.
- If your child uses shoe inserts such as arch supports, bring them along too.

Finding the right fit

- Be sure that the shoe has enough room for the toes and that the toes can wiggle freely inside it. There should be a gap of 1 cm between your child's longest toe and the end of the shoe.
- Make sure the heel of the shoe is snug but comfortable. The shoe should have a rigid but cushioned heel. Your child's heel should not move around very much inside the shoe.
- Be sure that the ball of the foot fits snugly at the widest part of the shoe.
- Shoes should be comfortable to stand and walk around in. Do not assume that they will 'stretch' later. A shoe should NOT have to be 'broken in' if it fits properly.
- It is common for one foot to be a little bigger than the other. If your child's feet are slightly different sizes, fit the bigger foot first.

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