

# Shoes That Fit

Help You Stay Active by Robert P. (Bob) Thompson, CPed

## DOES GETTING OLDER MEAN YOU NEED TO SLOW DOWN

and worry that you're at greater risk of falling? Absolutely not.

If you've been active, you can continue to engage in regular physical activity; if you're managing any medical conditions,

you can continue to do all your daily activities and remain

independent. As for the risk of falling, staying as healthy and

strong as possible should help ease concerns, and you might

consider adding strength training and balance exercises into your

mix of activities. That said, you do need to pay special attention to

your footwear, particularly if you have a lower-limb amputation.

Your priority at all times is to protect your sound foot.

Age brings some changes that affect the sound foot,

and those changes take an even greater toll if an amputee

places more weight on that foot. The fat pads on the

bottom of the heel, ball and toes degenerate. Foot muscles

weaken and tendons and ligaments become less resilient.

Your foot may ache at the end of the day, and it is more

vulnerable to stress fractures and other injuries. Your foot

also gets longer and wider with age, and the arch may


fall and require support.

*How do these changes affect your footwear choices?*

### To provide maximum protection for your sound foot:

→ Have your gait, foot characteristics, ankles and arches evaluated by a foot health professional. The results will help you make an informed decision about shoe style, material, cushioning and heel height.

→ Ask your foot health professional about arch support. Is your foot rigid or flexible? An orthotic or insert can support a flexible foot with a low arch or a rigid foot with a high arch. Proper arch support will help ensure optimal alignment of the ankle joint, knee joint, hip joint, lower neck and back.



Following these simple steps can help you enjoy the benefits of an active lifestyle without the pain of footwear problems.

Learn more at [ipfh.org](http://ipfh.org).

- ➔ Wearing properly selected and fitted padded socks made of acrylic or acrylic blends can help wick moisture away from the foot. Studies have shown that they can also help prevent injuries to the skin/soft tissue of the foot caused by impact, pressure and shear forces. Such injuries are a major cause of diabetic foot ulcers.

### Now you are ready to consider shoes.

You will need to fit both your sound foot and your prosthetic foot to ensure that they work well together.

- ➔ To get the best possible fit, the Institute for Preventive Foot Health (IPFH) suggests following its integrated approach: Wear the padded socks you intend to wear in the shoes, as well as any insert or orthotic for your sound foot, when you're trying on shoes. Those who wear different heel rises with their prosthetic foot should have their prosthetist create heel wedges. Make sure you have the appropriate heel wedge with you.



- ➔ Choose shoes with a rounded toe box, strong heel counters, cushioning and non-slip soles for safety. Laces or velcro will help ensure that the shoe stays on. If you're buying shoes to engage in a specific activity and/or to wear with an activity-specific prosthesis, make sure the shoes (and your padded socks) are appropriate for the activity.
- ➔ Put on both shoes. The toes of the sound foot should have space to move around in the toe box. The prosthetic foot should fill the shoe with about one-fourth to one-half inch of extra space at the toe, just like the sound foot.
- ➔ Walk around in the shoes. Make sure neither foot slides up and down in the heel. Slippage can irritate your sound foot, making it vulnerable to blisters, cuts and other lesions; slippage of the prosthetic foot can adversely affect your gait and balance. Your padded socks can fill in some of the space at the heel, as can a heel spacer.
- ➔ As you walk, be sure that the heel height of the shoe works for you, and that there is adequate cushioning to help absorb impact. You should be able to walk smoothly and naturally, with hips level (one hip should not be higher than the other) and with a 50/50 weight distribution between the ball and the heel.

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