



Final Word on Flats

They're the fashion trend that just won't quit, but if you've ever worn flats for a long day of walking, you know they can leave your feet as achy as 2-inch heels. Here's how to find the best ones for your feet:

SHAPE COUNTS If you're carrying extra pounds, your feet are likely wider (due to the added pressure from your body weight). Choose flats that are cut wide through the toes and narrow through the heel.

BACK IT UP Flats that are cut too low at the heel can slip off as you walk, so look for a back that's at least 2 inches high. Also, bend the heel to test its firmness—a stiffer fabric or leather will give more support.

TRY FAKE FLATS Scout out shoes that appear to be flat but actually have a padded insole—the profile looks trim and flat, but the insole will give you extra support. If you can't find a flat with this feature, insert your own padded insole (available at drugstores).

GOOD MOVE

The stronger and healthier your feet, the less prone to foot injury you'll be. Try this quick foot stretch from Lee S. Cohen, D.P.M., a podiatrist for pro sports teams: Seated, with feet bare, roll a golf or tennis ball under the arch of one foot for 1 minute; repeat with the opposite foot.

Happy Feet

Your feet are easy to take for granted—until a pain or an injury derails your favorite workout. And if you're struggling with your weight, your risk of foot problems soars. A recent study from the American Orthopaedic Foot and Ankle Society found that as body weight increased, so did the risk of foot problems, and people with the highest BMIs most frequently required foot surgery. Take a look at these common foot conditions:

FOOT FAULT	FIX
HINDFOOT ARTHRITIS Inflammation that begins in feet and can move up to the ankles	Control pain with basic stretches (like our "Good Move," below left) and medications such as aspirin or ibuprofen. Surgery may be necessary in severe cases.
PLANTAR FASCIITIS Inflammation in the thick connective tissue that runs from the heel to the ball of the foot	Apply ice, rest your foot, and keep weight off it as soon as you notice inflammation. Your physician may prescribe anti-inflammatory drugs. Try using orthotics in your shoes to ease pain over the long term.
POSTERIOR TIBIAL TENDONITIS Shooting pain in the tendon that runs along the inside of the ankle and foot	Treat with rest or over-the-counter anti-inflammatory drugs. If the pain worsens, you may need to wear a soft cast on the foot for 6 to 8 weeks. Surgery may be necessary in severe cases.

Q&a I've lost 25 pounds, and my shoes seem too big. Is that possible?

Yes, weight gain or loss, aging, and pregnancy all can affect shoe size. So if you've lost weight recently, your feet may be narrower and you may need a smaller size or narrower width.

PHOTOGRAPHY: MATT BRASIER/MASTERFILE (TOP); MASTERFILE (BOTTOM).

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