

Back-to-School Shoe Shopping Tips

By Dr. Tina A. Boucher, DPM

When the final weeks of a care-free summer vacation come to a close, the sounds of school bells, slamming locker doors and students clamoring into classrooms are heard loud and clear once again. But before each new school year begins, parents eagerly seek out a wide array of school supplies and stylish new fashions for their children. One of the most important purchases on any parent's back-to-school shopping list is a pair of new shoes. For many parents, back-to-school shoe shopping may seem easier than a pop-quiz in gym class – but the American Podiatric Medical Association says there are several important factors should be considered:

Children's feet change with age. Shoe and sock sizes may change every few months as a child's feet grow.

Shoes that don't fit properly can aggravate the feet. Always measure a child's feet before buying shoes, and watch for signs of irritation.

Never hand down footwear. Just because a shoe size fits one child comfortably doesn't mean it will fit another the same way. Also, sharing shoes can spread fungi like athlete's foot and nail fungus.

Examine the heels. Children may wear through the heels of shoes quicker than outgrowing shoes themselves. Uneven heel wear can indicate a foot problem that should be checked by a podiatrist.

Take your child shoe shopping. Every shoe fits differently. Letting a child have a say in the shoe buying process promotes healthy foot habits down the road.

Always buy for the larger foot. Feet are seldom precisely the same size.

Buy shoes that do not need a "break-in" period. Shoes should be comfortable immediately. Also make sure to have your child try on shoes with socks or tights, if that's how they'll be worn.