



Where Can You Learn More About Your Feet?

Visit APMA.org to:

- Watch videos, find a podiatrist, and learn more about podiatric medicine from the experts themselves;
- Get a patient checklist to help you prepare for a visit with a podiatrist; and
- Use the glossary of foot health terms and find information to help you understand and care for your feet.

American Podiatric Medical Association (APMA)

Founded in 1912, the American Podiatric Medical Association (APMA) is the nation's leading and recognized professional organization for doctors of podiatric medicine (DPMs). DPMs are podiatric physicians and surgeons, also known as podiatrists, qualified by their education, training, and experience to diagnose and treat conditions affecting the foot, ankle, and structures of the leg. The medical education and training of a DPM includes four years of undergraduate education, four years of graduate education at an accredited podiatric medical college, and two or three years of hospital residency training. APMA has 53 state component locations across the United States and its territories, with a membership of more than 12,000 podiatrists. All practicing APMA members are licensed by the state in which they practice podiatric medicine.



SHOE INSERTS



TODAY'S PODIATRIST
TALKS ABOUT:

Shoe Inserts

www.APMA.org

Shoe Inserts:

What Are They?

You've seen them at the grocery store and at the mall. You've probably even seen them on TV and online. Shoe inserts are any kind of non-prescription foot support designed to be worn inside a shoe. Pre-packaged arch supports are shoe inserts. So are the "custom-made" insoles and foot supports that you can order online or at retail stores. Unless the device has been prescribed by a doctor and crafted for your specific foot, it's a shoe insert, not a custom orthotic device—despite what the ads might say.

Shoe inserts can be very helpful for a variety of foot ailments, including flat arches and foot and leg pain. They can cushion your feet, provide comfort, and support your arches. They can't correct biomechanical foot problems or cure long-standing foot issues.

If you have serious pain or discomfort, schedule an appointment with a podiatrist. He or she will assess your overall health and look for any other contributing factors. Today's podiatrists are specially trained to evaluate the biomechanics of the lower extremity. They can examine your feet and ankles, and recommend shoe inserts to fit your specific needs. And if a shoe insert isn't enough to solve the problem, a podiatrist can prescribe custom-made orthotics or suggest additional treatments to improve the comfort and function of your feet.

Types of Shoe Inserts

The most common types of shoe inserts are:

- **Arch supports.** Some people have high arches. Others have low arches or flat feet. Arch supports generally have a "bumped up" appearance and are designed to support the foot's natural arch.
- **Insoles.** Insoles slip into your shoe to provide extra cushioning and support. Insoles are often made of gel, foam, or plastic.
- **Heel liners.** Heel liners, sometimes called heel pads or heel cups, provide extra cushioning in the heel region. They may be especially useful for patients who have foot pain caused by age-related thinning of the heels' natural fat pads.
- **Foot cushions.** Do your shoes rub against your heel? Your toes? Foot cushions come in many different shapes and sizes and can be used as a barrier between you and your shoe.

Shoe inserts are designed to improve comfort. They cannot address underlying biomechanical problems of the foot. If your pain and discomfort remain (or worsen) after trying a shoe insert, consult a podiatrist.

Fast Facts:

Pregnancy can cause many changes in the feet that shoe inserts may help.

The American Podiatric Medical Association has granted several insoles the **Seal of Acceptance**.

Visit www.apma.org/sealofacceptance for the full list.

Choosing an Over-the-Counter Shoe Insert

Selecting a shoe insert from the wide variety of devices on the market can be overwhelming. Here are some podiatrist-tested tips to help you find the insert that best meets your needs:

- **Consider your health.** Do you have diabetes? Problems with circulation? An over-the-counter insert may not be your best bet. Diabetes and poor circulation increase your risk of foot ulcers and infections, so schedule an appointment with a podiatrist. He or she can help you select a solution that won't cause additional health problems.
- **Think about the purpose.** Are you planning to run a marathon, or do you just need a little arch support in your work shoes? Look for a product that fits your planned level of activity.
- **Bring your shoes.** For the insert to be effective, it has to fit into your shoes. So bring your sneakers, dress shoes, or work boots—whatever you plan to wear with your insert. Look for an insert that will fit the contours of your shoe.
- **Try them on.** If at all possible, slip the insert into your shoe and try it out. Walk around a little. How does it feel? Don't assume that feelings of pressure will go away with continued wear. (If you can't try the inserts at the store, ask about the store's return policy and hold on to your receipt.)

