

Specialty Footwear

Beyond the Basics of Taking Care of Your Feet

By Lucas Wetzel, on behalf of Comfort Plus Shoes & Footcare

If you've watched the NFL playoffs or other professional sporting events this year, you might have heard references to players wearing custom orthotics, or, in the case of Peyton Manning, taking special measures to reduce the impact of plantar fasciitis.

But it's not just pro athletes who need special treatment for their feet. There are a number of specialty shoes, socks and orthotic devices designed to treat specific foot conditions. You won't find them at your average shoe store, but taking the extra steps to find the right footwear for you can help improve specific conditions and your overall foot health.

Here's a quick overview of some of the most common kinds of specialized shoes and footwear:

EXTRA DEPTH SHOES

What they are: Whether your foot needs extra room to account for a foot irregularity or just to make space for custom orthotics, extra depth shoes can vastly improve support, comfort and relief for people with a variety of foot conditions. Extra depth shoes can contain as much as three times the depth of average shoes, and are available in widths up to 6E. Some of them may contain extra shock-absorbing materials to lessen the impact on certain parts of the foot. In spite of the extra space they contain, many of them are designed to look like a normal shoe.

Who might benefit: People suffering from foot deformities, edema, hammer toes, crossover toes, and anyone who needs extra room for specialty inserts, custom orthotics and foot aids such as splints, toe separators, toe guards and bunion guards.



ROCKER BOTTOM SOLE SHOES

What they are: Rocker bottom sole shoes (or just "rocker bottom" shoes) are shaped similar to how they sound — with a thick, rounded heel and toe, resembling the gradual curve of a rocking chair. These shoes are designed to be stable and balanced while standing, but allow one to "roll" through their stride without needing to put pressure on the toe.

Who might benefit: People with forefoot conditions such as hallux rigidus (lack of mobility in the great toe), metatarsalgia and Morton's neuroma, both of which involve the thickening of tissue around the nerve that leads to the toes.

HOUSE SHOES

What they are: While it's tempting to go barefoot while at home, many people have foot conditions that require their feet to be protected and supported at all times. A good house shoe can range from a slip-on shoe with a customized insole, to a



shearling-lined slipper that keeps your feet warm and cozy. Try to find something with an outdoor sole, as these offer greater support and allow you to step outside if necessary.

Who might benefit: Patients with diabetic neuropathy (who might not be able to tell when something injures or irritates their feet), plantar fasciitis (who require the arch of their foot to be supported at all times), metatarsalgia, Morton's neuroma or other conditions that require a reduced impact on the heel and ball of their feet.

SPECIALTY SOCKS AND HOSIERY

What they are: The most common specialty socks are compression socks, which gently squeeze the leg in order to stimulate bloodflow to prevent swelling and the formation of blood clots. Another popular specialty sock are non-binding socks made without seams or elastic. While some people prefer socks made out of natural materials like wool or cotton, socks made out of synthetic materials may be much less irritating and more comfortable.

Who might benefit: Compression socks can benefit those with deep-vein thrombosis, edema, phlebitis, or anyone who will be inactive for long periods of time, such as a long plane trip. Non-binding, seamless socks are ideal for patients with edema, neuropathy, or other conditions that may cause hypersensitivity in the feet or ankles.

If any of these products sound like they might be beneficial to you, stop by Comfort Plus Shoes & Footcare to speak with one of their licensed foot professionals or call us at (913) 451-4494 to learn more. As we always say — and as many people with foot conditions can testify — "When your feet hurt, your whole body hurts."



Comfort Plus is open Monday through Saturday
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