These Shoes Were Made for Walking

It is important to select good walking shoes that are comfortable and sturdy. Aim for support, flexibility and comfort. Here are some shopping pointers.

- Seek out a shoe salesperson with knowledge about walking shoes.
- Take along a pair of shoes you have worn for some time to show the wear pattern to a sales person.
- Shop later in the day or after you have been walking, as feet tend to swell over time as you walk.
- Try both shoes on with the type of socks you will wear while walking, and walk around at least five minutes.
- Check for pressure points, friction and slipping – they should be right now and not need “breaking in.”
- The toe area should have about ½” between your toes and the end shoe and enough width so toes can move freely.
- Look for a shoe that is lightweight and breathable.
- Shoes should be flexible enough so your ankle and shin muscles don’t fight with your shoes, causing tiring and aches. Many shoes marketed for walking are not flexible, while running shoes are flexible but may not flex in the right place, so try the bend test (see below).
- Replace shoes about every 600 miles. Extend their life by having two pairs you rotate so they have time to “bounce back” between walks.

**TWIST TEST** – They should twist a little.

**BEND TEST** – Try to bend the shoe in half, heel towards toe. It should bend at the ball of the foot. Some running shoes bend in the middle of the arch which is not the right place for walkers.

**POKE TEST** – On a level surface, poke the toe down. The heel should rise up off the surface. The natural curvature helps you roll through the step.

**HEEL TEST** – Walking shoes should not have a high heel – no more than an inch higher than the sole under the ball of the foot.

**FLARE TEST** – Some shoes have a flared heel for running stability, which you want to avoid for walking shoes. Look for heels that are even or undercut at the back for a good heel strike and roll-through step.