



# Why the Right Shoes for Osteoarthritis Are So Important

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## Shoes for Osteoarthritis: What to Look for

Osteoarthritis (OA) is characterized by the degeneration of cartilage within the body's joints. Two of the more common joints to develop OA are the knees and hips, and ankle OA isn't that uncommon either.

In the later stages of osteoarthritis, when the cartilage wears away and the joints are left with the bones to rub against each other, all types of movement can be uncomfortable. This discomfort is even more noticeable in the hips, knees, and ankles because of the roles each joint plays in the body's movements, especially walking.

As osteoarthritis in the hips, knees and ankles grow worse, one of the many options to manage the discomfort is to find the right footwear to accommodate your lifestyle and severity of OA. Not just any shoe will help alleviate the discomfort, and the wrong choice could make the discomfort much worse.

To find the right shoe for your lifestyle and level of OA discomfort, here are some shoes for osteoarthritis tips:

### **The Right Footwear Should Have Good Stability Support**

Shoes that offer added stability have rigid soles and supportive insoles that help take the weight off the ball of the foot, which is important for people with hip, knee, or ankle osteoarthritis. Removing weight from the ball of the foot and evenly distributing it around the foot relieves some of the added stress to the joints weakened by osteoarthritis.

I suffer from severe ankle osteoarthritis, and if I wear shoes that do not have extra stability support, my ankle tends to swell quicker and the discomfort level increases faster than normal. Because my ankle joint is moving in ways it's not healthy enough to handle, the longer I walk around without the right support, the greater risk I'm at of spraining that ankle or causing it to be very sore the next few days.

I've gone through a lot of different shoes to find the ones that provide the right support. It took patience and more money than I wanted to spend, but the benefits far outweigh the costs.

### **The Right Footwear Provides Added Shock Absorption**

In the most severe cases of osteoarthritis, joint cartilage can almost be nonexistent. Shoes with added shock absorption provide extra cushioning so the bone-on-bone joint isn't absorbing so much of the impact.

The extra layer of shock absorption also minimizes the strain on the joints affected by OA, so people are able to simply move around more comfortably or exercise for longer periods of time.

The severity of the osteoarthritis in my right ankle has left the joint to be bone-on-bone for a long time. The shoes I wear provide more shock absorption than regular shoes, giving my ankle joint the extra support it needs.

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I still like to be active, from walking my dog to working out, so shoes with more shock absorption allow me to workout a little longer and in less pain. While workouts are fairly low impact, it's nice to have shoes that absorb some of the impacts that occurs.

### **Shoes With a Curved Rocker Evenly Distribute Body Weight**

For individuals who have more advanced cases of osteoarthritis and the joint has reduced range of motion, rocker shoes provide some support and added mobility so the knees and ankles are not absorbing all of the weight on impact while walking.

A rocker shoe is characterized by thicker than normal soles that are rounded beneath the heel and toes.

Because rocker shoes can make walking more comfortable, one of the benefits is that shoes can allow people to exercise more often. The added exercise time is not only beneficial in the treatment of osteoarthritis, but it leads to other health improvements such as weight loss.

### **Properly Fitting Shoes Lead to More Than Osteoarthritis Relief**

When finding the right footwear, the fit is one of the most important considerations. The right shoe will allow for the toes to move properly while walking and if there is any swelling in the foot, there is room in the shoe to accommodate that swelling.

It's recommended to at least leave a half an inch beyond your longest toe so the foot has the right amount of space to move.

The extra room is especially important for individuals who have osteoarthritis in the ankle or parts of the foot. These areas tend to swell and if the shoe is just a little too small, that tightness around the foot and ankle can lead to more discomfort.

### **The Right Footwear Has Removable Insoles**

While many shoes can provide the support and stability needed to accommodate weakened joints, using orthotics can give a shoe much added support and stability. Removable insoles allow the orthotics to fit properly within the shoe and provide the support they were designed to give.

Before I had my first ankle surgery, I had custom-made orthotics. Prior to using them, walking was painful, uncomfortable, and my ankle would give out a lot, even with the good shoes I had.

Thankfully, when I got the orthotics I could keep those shoes because the insoles were removable. The good shoes coupled with the orthotics did wonders for improving my gait and make walking less painful.

Choosing the right footwear is important to get right when you want to better manage your osteoarthritis. Properly fitting shoes can allow for more exercise time, better joint support and stability, and less sore and fatigued joints at the end of the day.

There are a lot of options and styles to choose from, so it's important to be patient and try as many different shoes until the right fit is found. Once the right pair of shoes for osteoarthritis is in place, managing osteoarthritis can become an easier and more comfortable process to achieve.