

# If The Shoe Fits

*Finding the right athletic shoe is crucial to optimal performance for sports*

**(NAPSI)** – The right athletic shoe can enhance the performance of young athletes. Conversely, a shoe that fits poorly can hamper performance and could possibly cause injury.

Whether looking for running shoes, football cleats or soccer boots, footwear shoppers need to know what to look for to find the right pair of shoes. Kevin Carroll, Nike's resident sports medicine specialist and expert on training, offers tips for parents and teens on how to make sure the shoes they buy, regardless of brand, will enhance their athletic performance.

- **Proper fit:** Make certain your child gets a good fit. Use a Brannock device (that scientific-looking chrome device that measures length and width of the foot, found at most quality shoe stores). Allow plenty of room to grow. A child's foot usually stops growing at around age 12. Up to that age, allow for room when selecting footwear.

- **Rule of thumb:** Allow a half-size until the foot stops growing, or gener-

ally a thumb's length from the big toe to the end of the shoe. Extra volume can be taken up with extra socks. This gives your child's foot some room to grow between new pairs of shoes.

- **Static vs. dynamic fit:** Accuracy and proper fit are sacrificed if your child simply sits and tries on a pair of shoes (static fit). It may feel good, but it's not an accurate test. Once that pair of shoes is laced up, have your child get up and move around. Walk, run a little, move from carpet to hard floor. This dynamic fit test will allow your child to test a range of motion, similar to what he or she will experience every day. Then ask about potential blister areas, pressure or hot spots that the child might sense.

- **Take athletic socks with you,** or at least the kinds of socks your child will wear most often.

- **Girls shoes vs. boys shoes:** Each has specific needs for fit. Older girls, who are moving into women's athletic footwear, should seek footwear that is designed specially for women, affording the correct fit, rather than the shoe just being scaled-down men's footwear.

- **Function of the shoe:** Know how your child will wear these shoes. For physical education class, for example, a general type of product will suffice. It doesn't have to be specialized. A cross-trainer works well for PE-gym



floors and athletic fields – and for general duty.

- **Range of motion:** Know the range of motion for specific sports. Shoe needs will vary depending on how the young athlete moves. For running

shoes, the motion is linear, or basically a forward, heel-to-toe motion. Cross-training and casual field sports require not only running motion, but some lat-

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