

How To Choose the Right Summer Sandal

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Warmer weather is sandal weather and that always leads to questions about which sandals are good for our feet. During the summers, Pedorthists see a significant rise in plantar fasciitis (heel pain) and metatarsalgia (forefoot pain) cases and other conditions due to people wearing sandals with limited support far too often. Our feet work too hard to keep the sandal on (think a thong style flexible sandal) which causes undue strain on the tissues on the bottom of the foot. To help limit the possible side effects of summer sandals we've compiled some helpful hints about choosing the right sandals for you.

With a multitude of sandals available to consumers, it is important to know what to look for while shopping. Foot shape and function play a role in selection, but there are a few key things to look for with every sandal purchase to optimize your foot health and to avoid undue strain and injury. These features are particularly important for those who have foot problems or those who already wear foot orthotics.

Arch Support

The main thing to look for is arch support. The sandal footbed should not be completely flat or overly flexible (think the opposite of your traditional Old Navy sandal). They should have curved support under the arch of your foot. This allows your foot to sit comfortably in the sandal reducing the strain on your foot.

Heel Cup

The back part of the footbed where your heel sits should be curved so that your heel sits in a cup shaped support. This helps with maintaining the position of the heel and controlling motions of the heel. It prevents the classic problem of flat sandals where the heel comes off the inside edge of the heel.

Appropriate Sizing

When purchasing your new sandals, ensure that you are purchasing the correct size. As a 'rule of thumb' you should have half a width of your thumb at the tip of the sandal (when standing). It is really important that the arch of the sandal fit comfortably in your natural arch without your toes hanging over the end of the sandal or your heel extending off the back of the sandal. As for width, make sure that your foot is not coming off the sides of the sandals. Not only can inappropriate sizing can cause friction or discomfort it can also lead to unnecessary alterations in your walking pattern contributing to pain in the feet and legs.

Appropriate Features

Like anything, everyone requires different things when it comes to overall health. This is true for sandals as well. If you are lacking stability/balance, it is important to have a back strap and adjustable straps so that you can secure the foot as best as possible while walking. Having a deep heel cup with also help with stability. If you need metatarsal support, purchase a sandal with built-in metatarsal support. If you have a bunion, make sure the sandal straps avoid crossing the bunion to avoid friction. If you plan to put your custom foot orthoses into your sandals for additional support, look for sandals that have removable insoles, and talk to a pedorthist about appropriate fit in a sandal. There are adjustments that can be made to make your orthotics fit better into removable footbed sandals.

Intended Function for Sandal

Are you planning to wear your sandals to the beach? Look for a sandal that is EVA based and waterproof. If you purchase a cork-based sandal, it may break down over time if it is continuously getting wet. Are you planning to do a lot of walking or hiking in the sandal? Purchase a sandal with a back strap so your foot does not have to work overtime to keep the sandal on.

Brands to look for!

Some brands to look for when searching for the right model/style for you are:

- Birkenstock: Arch support, metatarsal support, waterproof options, comes in two widths
- Mephisto: Deep heel cup, arch support, forefoot rocker (on select styles)
- Cambrian: Arch support, width options, removable liners, forefoot rocker (on select styles)
- Finn Comfort: Arch support, metatarsal support, removable liners
- Vionic: Arch support, waterproof options, medially posted options (good for flat feet)
- Sole: Waterproof options, arch support, metatarsal support

Should you have any additional questions when it comes to sandals and your feet, visit your nearest Pedorthist and they would be happy to assist you with the process. Did you know that some sandals can be customized by a pedorthist for your individual needs? Sandals are often modified with added arch support, metatarsal support, pressure relief in the forefoot etc. If you have any concerns about your footwear or have questions regarding what can be done to help you with sore feet and legs book an appointment with a pedorthist for a consultation.