

Have your favorite pair of shoes long since passed their prime?

Look at the bottom of your shoes. Is the tread worn? Are there smooth places (especially around the heel) where the tread is worn down? Just like tires on your car, shoe tread wears away and the shoe provides less traction and support as this occurs. When it's time to purchase a new pair of shoes, the following should be considered:

Proper Size

Most people wear shoes that are too small! Remember, your feet change their shape and size as you age and your shoe size may increase. Make sure to get a professional fitting to determine your current shoe size. The best time to shop for shoes is later in the day because your feet swell as the day progresses. The shoe should have a fit that feels comfortable from the first wearing. Don't make the mistake of assuming the shoe will stretch or loosen up if it initially feels too tight when you try it on. Make sure to remember the "rule of thumb." A thumb's width of space should be available between the end of the longest toes and the end of the shoe. If you feel the shoe rubbing against the side of the little toe, you should try a "wide" size.

Check the Bottoms

A good pair of shoes should offer traction and should not be slick or smooth. However, avoid an overly aggressive shoe bottom as those can catch or drag on the floor and cause you to fall. Also avoid shoes with smooth leather or plastic soles which can be slippery on most surfaces.

Beware of Shoes with a "Rocker" Bottom

Often advertised as the "firm up while you walk shoe," these can cause you to be very unstable and lose your balance.

Natural Materials

While shoes made of synthetic material are often cheaper, leather and canvas allow for more airflow to the feet. This can help reduce skin irritations.

Solid Support

Hold the shoe in your hands and try to twist it. If it twists easily and offers little resistance, it will also offer little to no support for your feet.

Lower Heel

Choose a shoe with a low heel. Shoes with a wide floor contact area are associated with the lowest risk of falls.

Avoid Slip-On Shoes

Lace-up or strap-on shoes offer the most support for your feet.

Consider Canvas

Canvas sneakers or athletic shoes have all the features older adults should look for—lightweight, breathable, flexible, low heel, wide sole, and proper support.

Want to Help Prevent a Fall?

Studies have shown that older adults who wore slippers, socks, or went barefoot at home were at greater risk for falls as compared with those who wore shoes inside the house.