# How to Evaluate Shoes for Proper Stability

Most people suffering from foot and ankle pain will benefit from shoes that offer greater stability. This is not the case 100% of the time but most of the time having a more stable shoe will reduce many of the damaging forces that occur when the foot flattens or pronates excessively. The three tests below will help you determine if a shoe has adequate stability to reduce foot pain for most people.

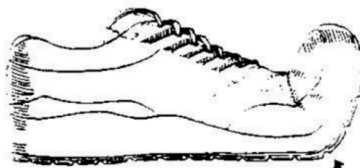"Rigid" Heel Counter
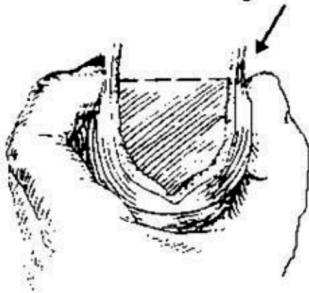
Rigid Heel Counter

A rigid heel counter will help keep the heel from rolling in excessively. This can be beneficial for many people with foot pain. To evaluate the heel counter rigidity grab the heel counter with the thumb and forefinger as shown to the left. For best support, you should not be able to compress the heel counter with your fingers.


Torsional Stability

A shoe with torsional stability is one where the forefoot (front) portion of the shoe cannot be easily twisted on the rearfoot (heel) portion of the shoe. Shoes with more torsional stability will help prevent excessive pronation that can lead to pain associated with conditions such as plantar fasciitis, big toe joint pain and ball-of-foot pain. To test torsional stability, grasp the heel counter of the shoe with one hand and twist it toward you while at the same time grasping the front of the shoe with the other hand and twisting it away from you. A stable shoe is one where there is minimal motion of the front of the shoe on the rear of the shoe.

"Good" Flexion in Forefoot
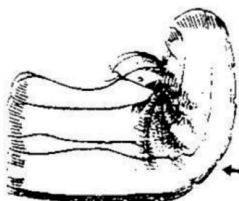
"Bad" Flexion - Bends at Midfoot

Forefoot Flexion at the Toes

Shoes should bend where your toes bend (see top picture at left), but not all shoes do.
Some shoes are constructed so that their natural bending point is in the middle of the foot (see the bottom picture at left). This unnatural flexion location forces your foot to fight against the shoe.
To test for the natural flexion point, grasp the heel of the shoe with one hand and place the palm of the other hand at the front end of the shoe and push back. The shoe should naturally bend at the toes as shown in the top picture at left.