

RUNNING SHORTS

Shopping for right pair of shoes a must

By Ken Johnson

When you run one mile, each foot strikes the ground nearly 1,000 times at a force equal to three to five times your body weight. While that might make running seem “unnatural,” a healthy human body is built to withstand that punishment. However, the body can always stand the help of a good running shoe. Running shoes help absorb shock each time your foot hits the ground. Which one should a runner buy? There is no simple answer. There are about as many brands and models of running shoes as there are runner types. By runner type, we mean running motion, foot shape, how the foot strikes the ground, runner weight, age, distance of runs and the type of surface run on. The key is finding the right shoe that is best for you.

You may be satisfied with your current running shoes. If they over six months old or have over 400 miles on them, they should be replaced, even if they still look good. Failing to replace worn shoes is a major cause of running injuries. So, how do you start the buying process?

The best thing to do is go to a reputable running shoe store. The nearest to Huntsville is Luke’s Locker in The Woodlands. Wear your running socks and your old running shoes and go later in the day when your feet are larger (yes, they swell after you are on them a while). A good running store, like Luke’s, will have you run on a treadmill to observe your running motion and gait to determine how your feet respond in a running situation. They will examine your feet and ask you a lot of questions about your running distance and running surface. Based on all this information, they will recommend the shoe that is best for you. For a good pair of running shoes, expect to pay \$70 to \$120.

An important factor in determining the right shoe is size. About 80% of people have one foot longer than the other. Buy for the larger foot and have a thumb width between your longest toe and the front of the shoe.

Some runners “pronate” (inward roll of the foot when striking the ground), as evidenced by excessive wear on the inside of the forefoot. Some others “supinate” (outward roll of the foot when striking the ground), as evidenced by excessive wear on the outside of the forefoot. The running shoe recommended for you will take this into account. Some shoes have built-in support to counter pronation or supination. This support section is gray and is normally visible in the mid-sole section of the shoe, the white section between the black sole and the upper part of the shoe. For example, gray in the inside portion of the heel of the mid-sole, would offer support for pronators. A neutral shoe does not contain the extra support and provides cushioning only. A counter is a rigid piece surrounding the heel that helps provide stability.

Depending on the arch of your foot and your running motion, you may need orthotic inserts in your shoes to provide support. These are purchased separately at a cost of \$30 to \$40 and can be transferred between shoes.

If you cannot make it to a running shoe store for an evaluation, try the Perfect Fit Finder on the Internet. Go to the Seven Hills Running Club web site (<http://www.7hills.us>) and click on Related Links, then Resources. Keep in mind that Perfect Fit Finder is very limited on the information considered in selecting the right shoe for you.

Whatever shoes you buy, look for function rather than fashion and make sure the shoe feels comfortable. Once you find the right shoe, get a second pair and alternate daily. This gives the cushioning in the shoe time to retract to its normal thickness.

Congratulations to the many Huntsville area runners who have been participating in races.

Jerry Flanagan, 67 of Madisonville, ran the 5K (3.1 miles) and 10K in the National Senior Games in Louisville, Kentucky. He ran a 25:22 in the 5K on June 30 and 53:05 in the 10K on July 3.

Niki Swearingen, 20, ran the Freedom 5K (cut to 2.6 miles due to street flooding) in Sugar Land on July 4. Her 19:38 earned her 3rd place in her age group.

Eleven Huntsville runners ran Stu's Country Mile 5K in Centerville on July 4. Most returned with trophies. Josh Spencer led the field with a 19:40, which earned for him a first in his age group. The last in was Marilyn Johnson, 61, who walked the course and won a first place trophy for her age group. Complete results:

Josh Spencer	19:40 (1st AG)
Robert Duncan	19:52 (1st AG)
James Spencer	20:40 (2nd AG)
John Cook	28:26 (3 rd AG)
Jan Park	28:39 (3rd AG)
Crystal Spencer	31:22 (2nd AG)
Skipper Nethery	32:26
Ken Johnson	35:21
True Cousins	36:25
Casey Spencer	38:09
Marilynn Johnson	1:02:18 (1st AG)

Registration is now open for the 29th Annual Huntsville Half Marathon 5K Run/Walk, to be held on October 13, 2007. To register, visit the Seven Hills Running Club web site.