

Ask the Professional – Do Your Running Shoes Pass The Test?

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Now that the snow is melted and spring is well on its way (or at least we really hope it is!), it would seem as though we can safely retire our winter footwear for the season and dust off our running shoes. It may also be a good time to see if your current shoes are in tip top form. There are many different brands and styles to choose from, but not all pass the test when it comes to providing the stability and support that your feet require. There are 6 tests that should always be done to running shoes and athletic footwear prior to buying a new pair, or determining if an older pair will still be up to par.

Test # 1 – Try to fold the shoe in half. A good supportive shoe will not fold at its centre point. In fact many brands have a reinforced centre portion to prevent weakness in the midline. If you can fold the shoe in half....then it's not the shoe for you.

Test # 2 – Try to fold the shoe where the ball of your foot (or forefoot) would rest. The shoe should easily bend at this point in order for your foot to easily 'toe off' when you take a step. If the shoe is too stiff at this area then pain and/or discomfort may be felt as the muscles and joints in your feet will have to compensate in order to overcome this increased stiffness.

Test # 3 – Try to pinch together the sides of the back of the shoe where your heel sits. If the side easily pinch together, then the back of the shoe will not provide the stability that your heel and the rest of your foot requires.

Test # 4 – Try to push down the back of the shoe towards the sole. If you can easily push the back of the shoe down then the stability of the shoe is in question. This area commonly gets 'broken down' when we don't undo our shoes before putting them on. Kids are especially notorious for walking around with the back of the shoe folded under their feet. Even on shoes that pass this test, this area can be easily compromised by repeated compression, so don't ever do this if you want your shoes to keep passing this test!

Test # 5 – Grasping the front and back of the shoe, with a hand on either side of the shoe, try to twist or 'wring-out' the shoe (similar to the motion you'd make when wringing out a dish clothe). If you can twist the shoe easily then the structural support of the shoe is seriously lacking.

Test # 6 – Comfort. This is the easy test, regardless of how the shoe measures up with the 5 previous tests, if it's not comfortable then keep looking.

It is also important to make sure that your shoes do not have too much wear on them (flip them over and see what the sole of the shoe looks like) and should never be too tight across the toes (the area called the toe box). By testing your shoes you will readily be able to determine if your shoes still have what it takes to provide you with the support you need and if you're in the market for new shoes you'll have a better understanding of what constitutes a good shoe regardless of the logo or price tag attached to it.

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