

Shoes for New Walkers

Now that your child has started to spend more time standing upright and beginning to take some steps, you might be wondering what kind of shoes would be most beneficial for your child.

At this age, your child's bones are still cartilaginous and are continuing to develop as they grow. Therefore, it is still important to encourage barefoot walking for foot development and strength as much as possible, such as inside the house or other safe environments. However, it is equally important to protect your child's feet when outside.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has the following guidelines when choosing shoes for a child:

1. Optimum foot development occurs in the barefoot environment.
2. The primary role of shoes is to protect the foot from injury and infection.
3. Shoe selection for children should be based on the barefoot model.
4. Stiff and compressive footwear may cause deformity, weakness, and loss of mobility.
5. Shock absorption, load distribution, and elevation are valid indications for shoe modifications.

In general, this means looking for shoes that are flexible with good traction at the bottom. The main purpose of a shoe in a new walker is for protection rather than stability, as it is important to allow the feet to continue developing naturally as much as possible.

Keep in mind, these are general principles. Some kids may need the additional stability for accomplishing other important milestones.

Make sure to also check every couple of months that the shoe still fits properly, as children grow quickly at this age and you always want to make sure the shoes have not gotten too small.

If you have other concerns regarding your child's walking, it may be beneficial to seek additional information from a pediatric physical therapist or visit your child's pediatrician.