

## Jerry Grimes, M.D.

### Do unstructured shoes help?

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So there's been, I don't know 10 to 15 years, where the unstructured or the barefoot shoe has become popular, both among runners and everybody else. It's kind of extending the flip flop to more athletic pursuits. When it first, we first are having these barefoot running shoes, we had a number of people who had stress fractures from them because they went from the really supportive shoes that had the heel kind of up a little bit relaxing the Achilles tendon to running in these very flat shoes with almost no cushion. Since then, I think the runners have become smarter about how they make the transition from the structured shoe to the unstructured shoe that allows them to have that barefoot effect. The human being was designed to walk barefoot, and we were designed to walk up and down hills all day long. And that naturally stretches us out. So yes, wearing a unstructured shoe can, you know help stretch things out. But I've had patients who've had horrible cramps in their calves after wearing an unstructured shoe for the first time for a day and then realizing that their Achilles was really tight and very unhappy about being stretched all day long.

### What are pros and cons of footwear like flip flops?

1:32

Those and just any very minimal sandal, like a strap sandal have very little support, they don't support the ankle from turning inside and out. So if someone has unstable ankles or weak muscles in the ankle, it certainly would not be a very good shoe to wear for any length of time because you run the risk of damaging the ankle by twisting it for people who have normal sensation and strengthen their ankle, using them. Say round a pool walking, you know, in the mall or something like that should be fine. We do have to watch out for things like the sun and sunscreen is a good idea on your feet if you're going to be wearing sandals outside for any length of time. And we do have to watch out for any type of injury. So we don't want to use it around anything that's dangerous lawn mowers, weed eaters, you know, animals, those type of things because they provide very little protection of our foot. You know if anyone's worn flip flops for any length of time, you know that stone always seems to find its way between your shoe and your foot. Well, that could be anything that's sharp or pointy and could end up with a wound so we want to be careful. There is one group of people who should never wear open shoes and that would be our diabetics.

### Why should someone with diabetes avoid that type of footwear?

3:02

Especially if they have neuropathy. Diabetics may not feel that they're rubbing a hole or that they have a wound. I've had people come in with needles they didn't even know they stepped on. But even if they don't have neuropathy and a lack of sensation in their feet, diabetics don't heal like everybody else. And so if they get a wound, the risk of infection and wound problems is much more magnified with a diabetic. So in general, anyone who has diabetes we discourage from open toed shoes

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### Why is sunscreen so important with this type of footwear?

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So about once a year I get a patient who's referred to me with a melanoma on their foot. We don't think of that as being a place we think people get them on their face or neck or shoulders, but you can get a melanoma on your foot. And unfortunately, that is the most dangerous place that you can get a melanoma we don't really know why, whether it's we just don't notice them or whether they are more aggressive. But when someone has a melanoma on their foot, it's a very, very serious problem.

### Is melanoma more difficult to treat on a foot?

4:18

If they get very large, it's very hard to be able to excise them and still save the foot/

### Does the thickness of a flip flops sole make any difference?

4:29

Obviously the ones who have lots of cushion will be more comfortable you know almost like walking on a cloud and the really thin ones are very little cushion you're going to feel the structure the ground underneath you. Actually, I don't think there's a big difference in the safety or the effect on your foot unless you get to some of the ones that are really really tall and then you have the of course the risk of sliding off of it and spraining your ankle but for the most part, the ones that you can buy that are just you know something from this thickness down to the very thin ones, I don't think they offer much difference in protection of your foot.

### Should people be concerned about arch support with this type of footwear?

5:06

You know, a young healthy person oftentimes needs no support in their foot. But we do have special cases. And then as we age, our resilience to stress on our foot goes down. So one of the types of feet that we often see in our clinic, and it's actually more common in women than it is in men is the flat foot. Now, some people are flat footed from birth. And if it isn't painful, it's not considered a problem. But once it becomes painful, or if you had an arch and it starts to fall, we consider that a problem that we need to treat, one of the early treatments is an insert in the shoe that actually supports the foot by pushing up on the inside, to provide support for that tendon that's having a problem. And you can actually get those in sandals, you're not going to buy them at Walmart, but you can buy sandals that actually have that what we call a medial support in them. One place people do go wrong is they think they can just buy a tall arch to try to support the arch that's already fallen. And that's never going to work because the arch wasn't ever meant to really be pushed on.

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### What someone do if the arch of their foot is collapsing?

6:28

If you're starting to have a collapse of your arch, or you're starting to have pain on the inside edge of your foot, when you walk without support, you probably ought to see a health professional, because you probably are going to need a specific type of insert. And it really, they need advice on what that insert is, we oftentimes seen people in the wrong shoe, we'll see people who don't need that medial support, maybe even if, you know they need the support on the outside, and they'll be wearing it because, you know, they've heard it's, it helps with foot pain.

### How can people find the best shoes for their particular feet?

7:04

People who have, you know, bunions or who have ankle instability, or hopefully my diabetic patients all need to be very, very careful about what shoes they wear, picking out the appropriate shoes. You know, you go to the store, and there's a shoe for every sport, you know, you have your golf shoe, your tennis shoe, your racquetball shoe, they make shoes for every single sport. And sometimes it's difficult to know what is the best shoe for you. And so I do recommend my patients going to a shoe store that has knowledgeable staff who can actually talk to them about their shape of their foot. Some places even have what we call a Pedobarograph, which is a device you stand on and it actually measures the shape of the bottom of your foot to help pick out your shoes.

### Does the size and shape of a person's foot continue to change as they age?

8:04

Yes, we do tend to have our feet widen a little bit over time. And a lot of times we get to go up his shoe size as we age. And the other thing that happens is, you know, if you find a shoe that really works for you, we tend to buy that same shoe over and over again, the manufacturers can change how they actually build the shoe, or even where they build the shoe. And that can make a big difference. And so a shoe that is always fit you suddenly doesn't. And so if you find a shoe that you may have worn forever is hurting your feet, get rid of it. I mean, if a shoe hurts you, you should not be using it, it should not be in your closet.

### How can a wider shoe improve foot problems?

8:49

For a foot surgeon, we never like the really narrow shoes. A fun exercise is to stand on a piece of paper, trace your foot out, and then put the shoe on top of it. A lot of your women's shoes you'll have a half inch on either side. And that means that your foot's having to be squashed into that space of the shoe we normally would take up you know the wider room. And so that's always an interesting thing with women is to trace out their foot and show their shoe compared to what their foot really expects. But there are people who need specially extra wide shoes. You know,

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those are the people with our bunions and with hammer toes, corns things like that a lot of times by changing the shoe and getting them and these are usually medical shoes that are called wide toe box shoes. But you know, I've had gentlemen who have come in who can't wear their western cowboy boots anymore. And we can get them into a roper and they do just fine. And so if we can change the shoe instead of changing the foot it's always best.