



Press Release

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Overweight children

Members of The Society of Shoe Fitters are trained to take into consideration the weight of a child and have noticed a marked increase in overweight kids in the last few years.

The most important thing to remember about any footwear is that 'it is important to wear the right shoe for the right occasion'. Shoes are designed to do different jobs and take differing amounts of wear. Overweight children (particularly boys) often turn to wearing trainers all day – purely because their construction offers comfort due to the padding inside, soft chunky soles, as well as the ability to open wide. Trainers are designed and manufactured to be worn for sporting purposes, not for all day wear so it is slightly ironic that children wearing sporting footwear (and clothing) are often the ones who do not move enough! Daily wear of trainers leads to a completely different set of foot health problems, so much so that we offer a leaflet and give advice on our website regarding trainers.

Overweight girls often turn to trendy pumps. These shoes are completely flat with no fastening. Again they are not ideal if not fitted correctly, as the foot can 'bubble' out of the topline (not just unsightly but can rub the foot and create blisters) and toes are 'clawed' to keep them on. Inevitably they break the backs down as there is little support and the foot can then turn whichever way it chooses, so children drag their feet and slouch. Unless the ballerina pump is high quality there is likely to be inadequate shock absorption in the sole and insole and then the foot is prone to plantar fasciitis – which is extremely painful. Flip flops do not help either – the one size fits all approach simply allows the feet to become more flaccid. The arches become overworked and bear the entire child's weight, where a properly constructed shoe is designed to take weight in specific places. The fashion for cheap copy-cat sheepskin boots fit into this category too – although even 'slim Jim's' can find that the lack of supportive construction in the manufacture may allow their gait to misshapen the boots, problems can ensue from over wear. What all these items have in common is that they are flat and the actual construction is unsupportive. Heels are often criticised, but heels are not always bad – moderation, fitting and regular changes are the key! A shoe heel of any height makes you lean back onto your heel which in turn pushes out your bottom and thrust your hips and tummy forward (the reason high heels have such a sexy image due to the pronounced inadvertent sexual pose of the wearer). This makes overweight girls become more aware of their size and they revert to 'flatties', where they feel safer.

Extra weight puts strain on the arches and muscles in the foot, ankles, leg and hips, affecting your entire physiology (even migraines can be attributed to ill fitting footwear) so finding comfortable shoes are important to try to keep this sector of society mobile. If your feet hurt due to ill fitting shoes, then you exercise less and inevitably gain weight...a vicious cycle. GP's, Chiropodists and Podiatrists are inevitably seeing problems associated with the feet, but their knowledge of mainstream footwear is somewhat limited and therefore we would recommend they contact qualified shoe fitters who are able to give knowledgeable advice – and that doesn't mean having to wear something boring or old fashioned!. Taking a shoe wider and wider is not necessarily the answer, in fact in often pays to go longer and narrower (although depth would be a greater consideration with an overweight child) as it is all about how the weight is distributed within the shoe, but a qualified shoe fitter will always recommend a structured shoe, preferably with a fastening, for kids who need to get in shape.

Laura West- Secretary of the SSF (We are a 'not-for-profit' organisation set up 55 years ago this year, to offer the best advice about shoe fitting and footwear problems)