

Tips on shoe care

While everyone gets a different life span out of their shoes the average distance for running shoes is around 500 miles or 800 kilometers. The distance run or walked in a shoe is a better indicator of life span than the amount of time you have owned them. After this amount of distance on a shoe the cushioning and support is substantially reduced. This is when people will start to feel little aches in their joints; less support means foot and leg alignment starts to move further away from center as a result of factors such as over pronation. They may also notice their legs and muscles are more tired and sore from the jarring resulting from the reduced cushioning.

A number of factors affect the cushioning and support from your most important piece of running equipment. These include:

- ~ Your weight – the lighter you are the less force on the shoe.
- ~ Your age – a 9 year old is a lot harder on shoes than a 3 year old.
- ~ How often the shoes are used – do they get a chance to dry out between uses?
- ~ Personal gait cycle style – heavy heel or forefoot strikers pound harder on a small surface area of the shoe.
- ~ The surface the shoes are used on – trails are more forgiving on both your legs and your shoes.

To make sure you get the maximum life out of the shoes follow these simple hints:

- ~ Hand wash shoes using a mild liquid soap. The removable insoles can be washed as well and left out until the shoes are dry.
- ~ Dry the shoes at room temperature without the use of heat from a furnace duct or dryer. Forced heat will dry out both the glues used to hold the shoe together as well as the natural oils in any leather used.
- ~ High heat can shrink many midsole materials. Even leaving them in a car on a hot day can have the same effect as heat drying.
- ~ Putting soft paper in wet shoes can help absorb excess water.
- ~ Shoes should be allowed to dry thoroughly between wearings to extend their life. Two pair of shoes alternated between runs may be necessary if you run daily.
- ~ Replacing the insole once the original one has flattened out under the ball of the foot or at the heel can give you extra miles on the shoes. Most support and cushion insoles bought from a quality manufacturer are better than the original ones that came with the shoes.
- ~ Use lightweight models or racing flats only for races and speed work. Do your daily workouts in regular training models that have more durable outsoles and thicker midsoles that will stand up to the miles.
- ~ Wearing socks is easier on both on your shoes and your feet.
- ~ If you wear orthotics make sure that they fit in the shoe you buy. The orthotic should not push on the sides of the shoe upper. The orthotics built with hard plastic forms are hard on the lining of shoes. They can cause tears especially if they move up and down in the shoe each time you place your body weight on them.

It will come as no surprise that a proper fitting shoe with the features needed for your running style and footstrike will outlast ones that do not. When buying shoes if you are not 100% sure what shoe is best for you, go to a retailer that is experienced in fitting and knowledgeable in the latest running shoe technology. The staff can help guide you during your buying decision and will have your best interest in mind.

Submitted by
Ken Friesen
Stride Ahead Sports