



# Getting Fit for Fitness

by Bri Kilroy • photos by Two Eagles Marcus

The sweet scent of fresh cut grass and blooming flowers; a flowing Grand River and laughing citizens in the distance. In Grand Rapids, the season of sunshine brings the opportunity to get active outside. Whether you're starting with more movement, upgrading your exercise regimen or adding a new challenge to your routine, having the correct shoe is a critical part of fitness progress and success.

"What you are wearing on your feet today will affect your foot health as you get older," said Frank Swanson, manager of New Balance Grand Rapids. "We see first-hand what wearing improper shoes can do to your feet later in life."

Bunions, hammertoe and cracked or blackened toenails are some of the visible effects on feet that have spent too long in tight shoes. Other issues include planter fasciitis, osteoporosis, osteoarthritis, and issues in calves and Achilles. Whether your feet show the aftermath of ill-fitting shoes or not, you're not alone. Over 60 percent of people are found to be wearing the wrong size shoes, most of which are too small for their feet.

## Are You a Shoe-In?

First, determine how long you've been wearing your current kicks. If it has been six to eight months or longer, you're due for new shoes. The life span grows shorter the more active you are. For example, runners should replace their shoes every 300-400 miles, which is about every four to six months when the cushion becomes too compressed.

Even if your feet aren't hurting, check the rest of your body. Do you experience pain in your knees or shins

while working out? Do you feel a dull ache or a slight twinge in your hips or lower back?

"It's because your body is taking more shock because your shoes are compressed," said Alison Modafferi, New Balance's in-store clinic coordinator and social media manager.

Getting yourself a new pair of shoes is not frivolity, it's an investment and with the rainbow of colors and styles available, you'll have a "health" of a time shopping.

## If the Shoe Fits.

The first step is finding a local shoe store that offers proper foot and shoe evaluation. New Balance Grand Rapids is a great place to start; the store is equipped with a staff of Fit Specialists, who are trained to measure every aspect of the foot to help each customer find their sole-mate.

New Balance Grand Rapids has been locally owned and operated by Gazelle Sports since 2003 and remains the only athletic shoe company that manufactures their product in the United States.

"We take time to listen to our customers," said Swanson. "Whether it's a patient being sent from one of the many medical offices we partner with to the general walker and avid runner, we are here to get everyone in the best fitting shoe that suits their needs and lifestyle."

## Begin the Heel-ing Process.

The shoe-fitting experience starts with a step on the

foot scanner, which illustrates what parts of your feet bear the most pressure. Both you and your fit specialist are able to see the high-pressure areas that normally indicate where the pain is present on the screen.

The scanner will also measure arch height and recommend an insert to best support the customer's



The first step to the fit analysis is standing on a foot scanner that measures pressure points and your arch.





arch. Some find that a new pair of inserts is an adequate solution, while others will need a new pair of shoes in addition to the inserts.

### Tread Over to the Shoe Wall.

The shoe wall begins with shoes designed for cross training, moves to running shoes and ends with the best pairs for light hikers. A line of “lifestyle” shoes follow with a number of designs that fit both work and play while still providing maximum comfort.

Next step is measuring both of your feet. Quite commonly, people have two different foot sizes. It’s important to try on both shoes to make sure you are getting the right fit for both feet.

Your gait, or manner of walking, is measured to figure out the level of support and motion control you need along with what activities you plan on doing in your new shoes. The cross training shoes have a harder toe and are beneficial for side to side movement, while breathable running shoes have a softer toe with more flexibility.



Four of New Balance GR’s fit specialists: Colleen O’Leary, Alison Modafferi, Hannah Osborn and Stephen Scholten.

“It’s important to have a certain type of shoe for different exercises because different shoes will offer varying types of support,” said Modafferi. “If you are doing activities with lots of side to side or lateral movement, a cross-trainer will support you.”

Based on your fit analysis, your fit specialist will match you with the pairs of shoes that will best match your lifestyle. Try them on and try them out; a treadmill sits near the checkout for customers to utilize. New Balance will film their customers walking or running in order to fully analyze their movement and determine any problems with their activity. “We’re making sure the shoe we choose for him or her fits properly and provides the correct type of support,” said Modafferi.

Getting fit for fitness is well needed for optimal performance and health, and New Balance Grand Rapids, located at 4499 Ivanrest Ave. SW, is ready to get you comfortably active. Stop in to ensure your first step into spring fitness is in a well-fitted shoe.



*Bri Kilroy is a Grand Valley and AmeriCorps alumni who learned to type through vigorous Mavis Beacon trainings. She also passes as an artist, illustrator and author of this bio.*

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