



Kids & SPORTS

The Valley's Youth Sports Parenting Resource

Good Footwork

Sport-Specific Footwear Gives Kids a Boost

by Dr. Brett Roeder

Youth sports are more popular and competitive than ever. Did you know that picking the right shoe goes beyond just heading to the “athletics” section of the shoe store? Buying a sport-specific shoe—a shoe designed for the exact sport your child will be participating in—not only improves your child's performance on the court or field, but also can help keep them free from serious foot and ankle injuries. Parents need to choose shoes that are sports-specific and match the foot type of their young athlete.



Roeder explains shoes need not be expensive, but when purchasing, parents should arm themselves with some knowledge about what to look for so their children can avoid sports/foot injuries while playing their chosen sport.

Dribbles and Dunks

Many kids make basketball their first organized sport of choice, so it's important to give them a shoe that both helps them perfect their basketball handling skills and prevents injury.

A child's basketball shoe should:

- Have a thick, stiff sole that gives support while running and landing from jumps to the basket.
- Incorporate high ankle construction that supports the ankle during quick

changes in direction. A good basketball shoe should have the strongest support on either side of the ankle.

Making a “Racket” on the Court

Court shoes for tennis and racquetball may look like any other athletic sneaker, but it's what's on the inside that makes the difference on your child's feet.

A child's court shoe should:

- Support both sides of the foot, due to the quick lateral movements and weight shifts in court sports.
- Provide a flexible sole for fast changes of direction.

Sprinting Toward the Finish

The running shoe is perhaps the most personal and intricate of all athletic shoes. Every runner, like every child, has different needs— and there are a multitude of choices out there.

A child's running shoe should:

- Provide maximum shock absorption to help runners avoid ailments such as shin splints and knee pain.
- Control the way your child's heel strikes the ground, so the rest of the foot can fall correctly.



Going for the Goal

Future Beckhams and Mia Hamms should wear soccer cleats that fit like a glove for best ball control.

A child's soccer shoes should:

- Not flex in the middle of the shoe. It should flex at the ball of the foot.
- Have cleats that are evenly spread out on the sole.

“If the child has particularly flat or high-arched feet, then they would also benefit from a prescription orthotic to improve their performance,” further explains Roeder.

Don't Forget the Socks!

Without the right sock, even the best athletic shoe won't quite cut the mustard. If your child exhibits signs of hyperhidrosis (excess sweating) or bromhidrosis (foot odor), selection of the appropriate athletic sock may reduce the incidences of these conditions.

The right athletic sock should:

- Be made of a natural/synthetic blend, as this helps “wick” away moisture best.
- Not contain any large seams that can cause blisters or irritation. **K&S**

Dr. Brett Roeder is one of a handful of rearfoot/ankle board certified podiatric surgeons in the Valley. He served as a staff podiatrist at the Phoenix Indian Medical Center, where he honed his skills in diabetic foot care and surgery, and lower limb care. He is a member of the American Podiatric Medical Association and the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons. Roeder currently has a private practice in Gilbert. Please visit gilbertfootsurgeons.com.