

# Bad Shoes? Bad Inserts!

New foot pain and problems may be due to your insoles, not your shoes.

The last time I bought a replacement pair of walking shoes, I listened to the advice of the sales dude. In most cases, I've been walking and wearing out shoes since before they were born. But it seems courteous to let them think they know more about shoes than I do.

I bought the latest version of my favorite shoes and some high-tech shoe inserts. I've always needed extra arch support, regardless of the brand of shoe. But weird things began to happen as I walked in these...

## Symptom One: Outside of Ankles Hurt

The outsides of my ankles began to hurt as I walked. It felt like [shin splints](#), but on the **outside** of each ankle. Shin splints hurt you on the **front** of your ankle, up as far as your knee.

## Symptom Two: Blistering Pinky Toes

My "pinky" toes began to blister, and the outer toes of both feet were tender after each walk. It was that unique tenderness that comes just before blisters.

## Symptom Three: Tender Foot Tops

The tops of my toes became tender, and wanted to blister after a long walk – right in the area at the base of the toenail.

## Symptom Four: Sweaty Feet

When I got home I had to take the shoes off immediately to let my tender toes air out. My sox were always damper than usual after a walk in these new shoes.

## After Two Weeks: Time to Investigate

After two weeks, the outsides of my legs were really hurting – from ankles to knees. I set aside the new shoes and used the old ones. The symptoms faded in four days, and I got intensely curious. What design change made the new shoes hurt my feet so much?

So I pulled the inserts out of both old & new shoes and went over the shoes like a police detective. The new shoes hadn't changed all that much. Different color, different tread pattern, but essentially the same materials, in the same places. The crucial padding was no different.

But! The tread on the new shoes had worn more deeply on the outside. The inside tread still looked fairly new. I've always had an even wear-pattern across the tread on my shoes. So if the shoes are pretty much the same, what was different? Those inserts?

## Pain on Outside of Ankles Explained

While I need a little extra arch support, I don't need much. I can get by with the arch supports you find at supermarkets. The kind with a little padding in the heel and arch. They are maybe three-quarters the length of the shoe, tapering to end just behind your toes.

The new inserts ran the entire length of the shoe. They were an eighth of an inch thick and made of rubber, supposedly impregnated with odor absorbing compound. And the arch support was really thick. Symptom one!

The arch support was SO thick, it felt like I had half a golf ball in my shoes. They boosted my arches so high that more of my weight was transferred to the outsides of my feet. The pain I felt was the unusual stress on the tendons in my ankles. Stress that built with each step until it became painful.

## Pinky Toe Pain Explained

That explains Symptom Two as well. My outside toes were bearing more weight because of the high arch padding. Naturally, those toes would be more tender and want to blister up.

### **Blisters on Tops of Toes Explained**

What about Symptom Three: the tops of my toes wanting to blister? The shoes alone fit just fine and didn't rub there. So? The new inserts were thick, and ran the whole length of the shoe. The inserts were forcing my toes up against the top of the shoe. Step after step, my toes got rubbed the wrong way by a part of the shoe that shouldn't rub at all.

### **Sweaty Feet Explained**

Symptom Four: sweaty feet? Despite the supposed odor-quelling properties in these inserts, they were made of rubber. Rubber is a good shock-absorber, but it's waterproof. Rubber doesn't absorb moisture. That left my sox to do the job, which rebounded to the skin of my feet.

I didn't reach all these conclusions as easily as I write about them here. It was only after weeks of pain, followed by weeks of comparison, that I finally found the problem. I had good shoes, which I'd wrecked with bad inserts.

### **New Pain With New Shoes or Inserts? Take Action**

If you're having problems like mine, change something fast! Make sure you don't have crummy shoe inserts in an otherwise fine pair of shoes. DON'T change shoes and inserts together. Conduct your footwear experiments one at a time...