



Guide To Buying Baby & Toddler Shoes

So you've decided to buy the first pair of shoes for your bub? You know it should be a fun trip to the shops but there are so many questions flying around your head...When is the right time? What is the correct type of shoe? Do I have to spend a fortune if they are going to outgrow them so quickly? What about soles?!!

Yes, it is probably the hardest item of clothing to choose but it is also the most important as feet are one of the most complex parts of the human body, with 26 bones, 33 joints and over 100 muscles and ligaments. They handle pressures of two times your body weight with each walking step. Given the average person walks over 160,000 kilometers in their lifetime, it is important to give our feet the respect they deserve—and the best start possible.

When most of us were growing up our mothers were told to buy us thick, sturdy lace up shoes with plenty of ankle support (in fact my mother is still trying to tell me this!). Thankfully, today studies show that barefoot is best for healthy foot development and confining shoes with heels or arch supports can negatively affect the development of the foot and cause problems through to adulthood. Medical research has also shown that in countries where footwear is not used there is an almost total absence of foot problems as an adult.

Of course, barefoot is not always a practical option so here is a guide on what to look for when purchasing your bubs first shoe!

Is that the time already! – When do you start putting your little bundle of joy into shoes? Well, if it's the right type of shoe and you feel there is a need, then when they start crawling is a good time to start looking. Once you see how scuffed the toes get on a crawler's shoes you'll know why – better the shoes than those precious little piggies!

Full leather soft sole baby shoes with elastic ankles are recommended at this time as they will protect the toes from floorboards, stone or tile floors, and suede soles can offer traction. This type of shoe still allows full spectrum of movement to help get them off the starting blocks!

Expensive isn't always best – Be warned! There are some crazy prices when it comes to children's shoes but buying the most expensive pair in the store is not always the best choice. You are often paying for a designer name and not the quality of the materials and research involved in the making of the shoes. Buy shoes from reputable companies designed specifically for toddlers and young children. A young child's foot is a different shape from that of an adult or teenager, requiring a correspondingly much bigger toe area than the shape of an adult shoe. Many shoe manufacturers children's shoes are simply scaled down versions of adult shoes.

Wiggle Room – Allow at least 1cm from your baby's toes to the top of the shoe. A common mistake parents make is to leave the baby in their stroller while trying shoes on. Unfortunately, lots of children's shoes are made far too narrow so the best way to avoid a narrow fit is to stand the baby up so that he or she can place enough weight to allow the foot to completely expand. That way you can also make sure that there is enough room for your baby's toes to spread freely which will not only promote comfort and healthy foot development but will also aid balance (which is tricky enough to master at this age!). It is also worth applying the 'wiggle room' rule to socks, sleepsuits and tucked in bed sheets too.

Also, as tempting as it is when we see the price of some shoes don't buy extra large shoes that they will 'grow in to' as this makes walking harder and falling easier!

Where's the other shoe gone? – Baby shoes that are held on with elastic around the ankle are great as they make it almost impossible for your little Houdini to pull them off. They also keep baby's socks from disappearing during the colder months. When they move on to the next shoe make sure it has sufficient fastenings, Velcro or long laces for double knots – there is nothing more annoying than getting back home to see one of your carefully chosen shoes has been left behind!

And most importantly... Desperately seeking Sole

(stage 1)– for the first shoe you really need to simulate barefoot conditions as much as possible. Look for shoes with no arch, heel or ankle support and soft flexible soles. The sole purpose (excuse the pun) of these shoes is to offer protection, but not to interfere with the foot in any way. Shoes made from natural, absorbing cloth or leather are preferable to synthetic materials as babies feet sweat more than adults. Suede soles are better for traction on tiles, floorboards and other tricky surfaces. Beautiful Soles '**First Steps**' offer a wide range of baby shoes with soft suede soles for ages 0-24 months.

(stage 2) There are some babies that start walking very early and have the need for a slightly more solid sole, but are not yet at the stage of needing, or sometimes fitting into full rubber soles – Beautiful Soles have recognized this and recently launched a growing selection of shoes called '**Inbetweenie Steps**' which, as the name suggests is perfect for toddlers that have fully mastered the art of walking but are still too small for traditional shoe. The '**Inbetweenie Steps**' range are all leather upper with a mixed sole of leather with rubber grip pads for added traction and durability.

(stage 3) Once your child is an established walker a flexible rubber, non-slip sole can be worn but make sure the shoe bends where the foot arches naturally, not just the toe area. All shoes in the Beautiful Soles '**Next Steps**' range have been carefully selected with this criteria in mind. The soles are light and flexible to aid your active child run, skip and jump with the necessary movement that some ridged shoes don't allow.

On average your child's feet will grow two full sizes a year until age four or five so regular measurements are essential. The three stages I have listed above do seem to change in the blink of an eye but foot health is so important especially at an early age. It's good to have all the facts so you can make the right decision when choosing the correct footwear for your child's development stage.

I hope this information helps you...please contact us at info@beautifulsoles.com.au or see one of our friendly local consultants if you have any questions!

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