

# THE BODYWORKS CLINIC GUIDE TO CHOOSING CHILDREN'S SHOES



Get the right fit for better posture  
and happy feet and legs



# WHO WE ARE

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Estelle Mitchell is widely recognised on the Costa del Sol as one of Spain's leading physiotherapists. Qualifying as a Chartered Physiotherapist in January 1978 having studied and trained with the RAF, Estelle is putting her wide and extensive experience to full use at Bodyworks Health Clinic.

Estelle founded The Bodyworks Clinic in 2004, with a focus on proper, careful and accurate diagnosis followed by qualified, expert treatment. In her determination to offer this she has developed a highly qualified team of specialists and acquired a number of tools, many of them unique to Spain if not to Europe!

### **SPECIALISED HELP**

For children from as young as 2 we use a system of assessment and analysis to monitor any potential issues and provide specialised support to prevent problems. We have invested in the most up-to-date technology and precision tools to get faster and more effective results while avoiding surgery and drugs. A combination of traditional hands on experience and modern technology means a high success rate.

**Technology means teeny, tiny measurements which mean teeny, tiny corrections** – if your child does need additional support the detail available to us means that we can make super slim, super discreet, comfortable insoles that they will actually wear. No clunky orthotic shoes for our patients please!

**Therapy in motion** – looking at how your child walks means we support them when they walk and run and play sport. Not standing/sitting (like a traditional plaster cast) but when they actually move. So this means movement is pain free.

# WHY ARE SHOES IMPORTANT?



Why do we go on about the importance of buying good, well-fitting shoes? And especially for school? Typically school shoes are the shoes kids spend the most time in. A long school day 5 days a week and probably whatever activities they are doing afterwards. These are the most worn, most used shoes.

## **BUT WHY DOES IT MATTER?**

While a badly fitting pair of trousers might be annoying or look a little silly a badly fitting pair of shoes can HURT. And, if it continues over a few weeks or even months, that pain can start to affect how your child moves and walks and runs.

## **A GOOD FOUNDATION**

The foundation of the body is your feet – if they don't work properly then they start to affect your ankles, which means the knees become involved and then the hips, lower back, upper back and neck. It's like that old song says, "The foot bone's connected to the ankle bone, the ankle bone's connected to the shin bone..." and on up the chain.

If the foot hurts then your child will be reluctant to run and jump and move about as much.

## **PROPRIOCEPTION**

Correct shoes are also a vital part of stimulating and supporting proprioception. This is your body's understanding of where you are in space, it is this feedback system which means you can touch your nose with your hand even if you have your eyes closed. And the feedback system from the feet is critical. If they aren't supported and encouraged to work properly it can be harder for this system to develop.

## **PREVENTING INJURY**

Not just long term joint problems but falls and injuries right now. If shoes don't fit correctly then your child can literally be tripping over his own feet, losing his balance and generally being clumsy and hurting themselves.

# 12 TIPS TO CHECK THE FIT

## DO YOUR CHILD'S SHOES "MAKE THE GRADE?" TAKE THE 1 • 2 • 3 TEST



1

### LOOK FOR A STIFF HEEL

Press on both sides of the heel counter. It shouldn't collapse.



2

### CHECK TOE FLEXIBILITY

The shoe should bend with your child's toes. It shouldn't be too stiff or bend too much in the toe box area.



3

### SELECT A SHOE WITH A RIGID MIDDLE

Does your shoe twist? Your shoe should never twist in the middle.



With thanks to stride rite for this handy visual

- 1. Buy shoes for right now** – while it is tempting to buy shoes with “room to grow” it is better to buy shoes which fit your child’s foot right now. Buying shoes that are too big can cause clumsiness and more falls.
- 2. Rule of thumb** – when trying on new shoes get your child to wiggle their toes. You should be able to lie your thumb between their toes and the end of the shoes (thumb width)
- 3. Toe flexibility** – you want a shoe that bends with your child’s toes but you shouldn’t be able to fold it in half with your hands.
- 4. A good base** – look for shoes with a wide, stable heel made of a good, shock absorbing material. About 2-3cm or 1 inch is about the right height. Totally flat shoes (like ballet flats and flip flops) can cause knee pain as they don’t provide any extra “bounce”
- 5. No heel movement** – make sure your child’s foot is securely in place in the heel and doesn’t move from side to side or back and forwards as they walk. This can cause muscle tension and friction blisters.
- 6. Stiff heel** – if you squeeze the heel of the shoe between finger and thumb it shouldn’t collapse.
- 7. Rigid middle** – can you twist your child’s shoe with your hands? Then you need a stronger, firmer sole
- 8. Seams and details** – run your finger around the inside of the heel and shoe to check for any seams, stitching or details that might rub.
- 9. Weight** – we want a firm strong shoe not a lead weight on the end of the foot! Too heavy and the leg muscles have to work too hard and get tired too quickly.
- 10. High arch adjustment** – if your child has a high arch make sure that the shoes are adjustable with straps or buckles so that they don’t press against it.
- 11. Arch support** – many trainers and good shoes have a small amount of arch support built into the shoe. Choose these where possible.
- 12. No breaking in!** – NEVER buy shoes for your children that need to be “broken in”. If they aren’t soft enough and big enough when you buy them get different shoes!

**AND REMEMBER – IF YOUR CHILD COMPLAINS OF FOOT PAIN – CHECK IT OUT!**

# WHEN GOOD SHOES AREN'T ENOUGH



*Try the footprint test on a piece of paper. A high arch is depicted on the left; flatfoot is on the far right*

Sometimes kids need more support than a good pair of shoes can provide.

## THINGS TO WATCH FOR:

**Flattened feet** – stand your child facing away from you in bare feet and see if their ankles roll in. If they do and they are older than 5 then some little insoles could make a big difference. Younger than 5 it is common for the arch not to be fully developed yet and for feet to appear a little flat. However if you are concerned, get a professional opinion, always better to ask and be told “there’s no problem” than to miss something.

**Toe walking** – often when toddlers are learning to walk they walk on their tip-toes. But if this persists beyond approx. age 3 it might be good to check and make sure there aren’t any other issues or reasons why they are still doing this.

**Clumsy and falling** – keep an eye on your child. If they are always tripping and falling or want to remove their shoes, double check the fit or try a different pair. If the fit is good and this continues in different shoes, then it may be worth getting a professional opinion.

Lots of sports – foot, ankle and knee injuries become very common in youngsters who play sports. Some professional help and some extra support in their sports shoes could prevent long term problems.

## WHO TO ASK

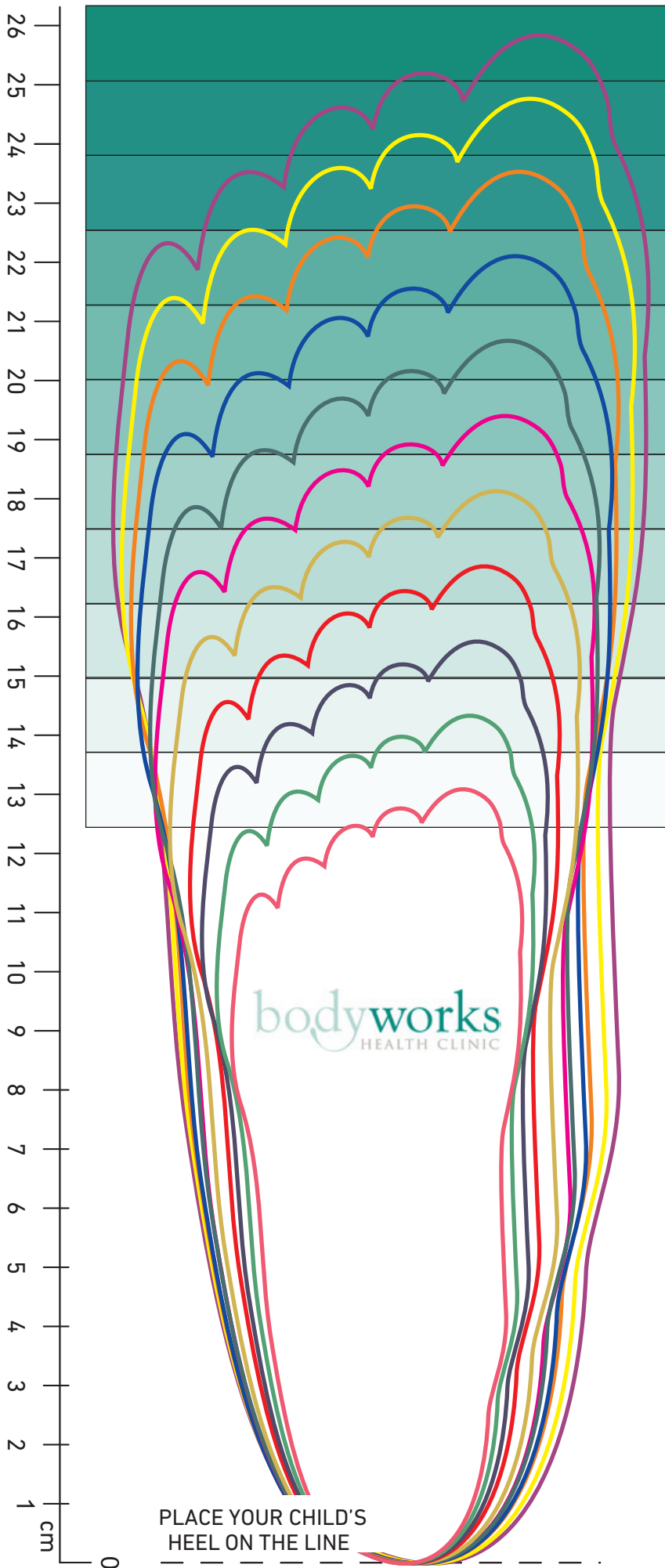
If you do want a professional opinion make sure you are asking the right person!

A UK trained physiotherapist will be able to assess your child and help. As can a podiatrist.

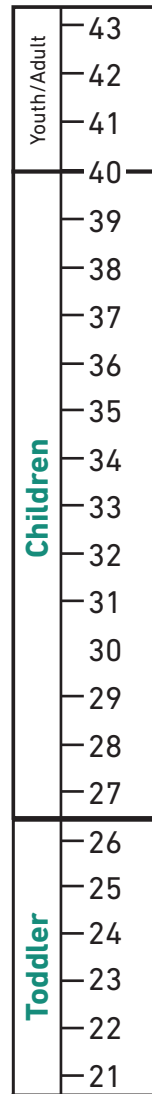
For other professions do check whether they have the additional qualifications and experience to provide support. Some osteopaths work with children, some chiropodists are also qualified and physiotherapists that have trained outside the UK may also have additional qualifications.

Medical professionals have worked long and hard for their qualifications and will be proud to show them to you so don’t be afraid to ask!

## AND REMEMBER – IF YOUR CHILD COMPLAINS OF FOOT PAIN – CHECK IT OUT!



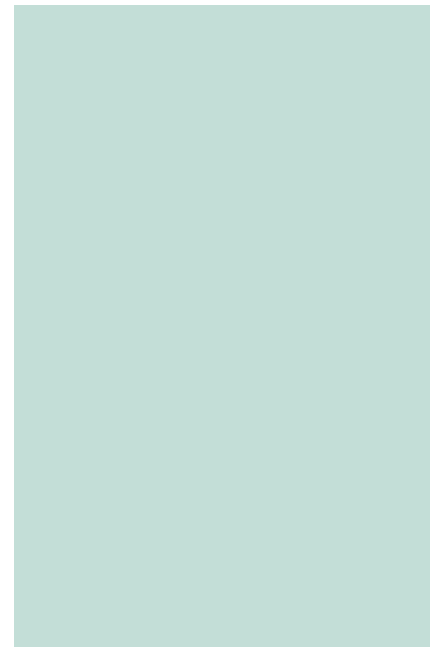
PLACE YOUR CHILD'S  
HEEL ON THE LINE



EURO  
Shoe Size

Check the size of your child's feet by printing out this page and putting your child's feet on the chart.

Place a credit card on this square to ensure this page has printed to the correct size



UK	EURO
8	26
9	27
10	28
11	29
12	30
13	31
1	33
2	34