

Choosing the right running sock – Ben Sweeting - Podiatrist/Director Performance Podiatry

Most athletes spend considerable time and money on having the right running shoe fitted and matched to their particular foot type. Often overlooked is the importance of purchasing the correct running sock.

Many foot problems such as friction blisters, bruised nails, corns, calluses and fungal infections can be caused by ill-fitting or the wrong choice of sock.

One of the most common running injuries seen in my clinic are friction blisters. In fact, the majority of distance runners have experienced blisters at one point in time. Normally thought of as just a nuisance, blisters have the potential to sideline runners.



The best protection against blistering is correct fitting footwear and socks. Blisters are caused by friction and shearing forces from the shoe and sock against the skin. The skin absorbs these forces and when accumulated can cause separation at the deeper layers of the skin, creating a blister.

Excessive moisture from perspiration causes the skin to adhere to the sock which significantly increases the friction of the skin against the sock. Therefore it is crucial to have a sock that can effectively transfer perspiration from the skin to the outside of the sock and then to the upper of the shoe where it can evaporate.

Traditionally it was thought that a natural fibre sock can wick moisture away the best. This has been shown that this isn't necessarily the case; in fact cotton socks when wet will stay wet for a long time. Synthetic fibres (e.g. CoolMax©) are far more superior at controlling moisture on the skin.

Fit is another important consideration, with many technical running socks offering anatomical fit and sizing (just like shoes). This reduces the risk of socks bunching/wrinkling or squashing the toes and toenails. Toe socks may be beneficial to runners that suffer from blistering or corns between toes.

So when you purchase your next pair of running shoes, give some thought to socks as well. Professional advice is recommended for persistent blistering or foot problems.