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If the Shoe Fits . . .

By Helen Putnam

Extension Expert

How often do we take time to realize how closely related our posture, health, and clothing are? The clothing affects our posture and both our clothing and posture have a direct effect upon our health. Since our feet have a great deal to do with our posture and are really the foundation of our bodies we might first consider them. The feet in relation to their size do more work than any other part of the body. It is not any wonder that by night many of us are going to have tired aching feet, is it? Then it is going to be very easy to believe that the sum total of pain from the feet equals that from all other diseases. If a building has a poor foundation cracks or crevices may in time occur in the ceiling. In a similar way if we have a poor foundation, the lines in our faces soon tell the sad, painful story. Our feet have to be kept in good running order the same as our automobiles, and it is an even more difficult task, for the feet are one mechanism of locomotion for which there are no spare parts. In view of these facts we cannot be too careful how we dress our feet.

The size of our shoes is one of the first things to consider. There is nothing which spoils one's posture and appearance any more than hobbling around in shoes a size or two too small for the feet. And how many people, I wonder, are going to notice in the busy rush of affairs whether our shoes are total of smaller or not. We must fit our feet with shoes and not compel our feet to fit themselves to the shoes.

This is especially true of a child's foot. Babies have no muscular development. The bones of the foot are supported by fatty pads which are gradually absorbed and replaced by muscles. This is why a baby's foot appears usually to be perfectly flat. The bones in a baby's foot are easily deflected and will quickly take the shape of the shoe. A small child's shoes should be an inch longer than the foot and three-fourths inch wider. It is sometimes difficult to check the size of a child's shoe when buying as so often if a child likes the shoe, he is reluctant about telling if the shoe pinches the foot. To avoid this difficulty mark around the child's foot with a pencil, then place the shoe to be bought on this outline marking around it in a similar way. In marking around the heel always keep the pencil in a perfectly perpendicular position. The two outlines will readily show whether or not the shoe is roomy enough. An adult's shoe should be one-half inch longer than the foot and the same width or possibly one-fourth inch narrower than the outline of the foot. Some of the points to look for in a correctly shaped shoe are:

1. That its inner edge be straight.
2. That there be ample room so that the foot may rest squarely on its 3 points of suspension, the heel, the base of the great toe, the base of the little toe.
3. That the inside be perfectly smooth, free from tack points or wrinkles of any kind.
4. The soles should be heavy enough to protect the feet from shock, and yet flexible enough for comfortable walking and proper exercises of the feet.
5. The heel should be broad enough to give support to the foot. The heel seat should be wide enough to allow for the spread of the heel in taking the weight of the body and the toes should be narrow to conform to the natural curvature of the heel and ankle.

Hose are next in importance as many cases of distorted feet may be traced to poorly fitting stockings. Stockings which are too short or too narrow are injurious to any foot, and especially a child's. Socks and stockings for children are now manufactured with a natural toe. If you have to pull and stretch the stockings over the child's foot it will save money in the long run to replace these with some large enough. Even an adult's hose should be one-half inch longer than the foot. The length of your foot in inches plus the extra half inch would be your correct stocking size. Fancy dried hosiery should never be allowed on a child suffering from a blister or anything which may be caused by a break in the skin or where there is excessive perspiration or tenderness. Stockings should be changed every day and it is better if they are washed after each wearing. They should at least be changed daily if not washed so they are thoroughly dry before each wearing.

Poorly fitting shoes and hose are very liable to throw the body out of correct posture. This not only causes nervousness and disagreeable natures, but spoils the appearance of our clothing as well. Our bodies, we might say, are the framework of our costumes, and if the framework is out of proportion, expensive or beautifully made garments cannot hide its defects. Our postures and health are not affected by shoes and hose alone. One point to be especially careful about in children's clothing is that there are no bands on the garment at the waist-line which cause pressure. To have garments which give plenty of room for chest development, to have adjustable shoulder straps, and to have hosiery supporters rather than round garters are the important points. Sometimes numbness of the feet or toes is caused by tight garters or shoes bared too tightly. Round garters, however, are not considered as harmful as supporters improperly placed. Supporters should never be arranged so there is any weight pulling from the outer tips of the shoulder as this causes a hollow chest and round shoulders.

In buying a foundation garment we may follow one of the same rules as in buying shoes. We should not expect the foundation garment to actually shape the body any more than we expect shoes to shape the feet. The foundation garment should support, not confine. In order to have both an attractive appearance and comfort it should be of suitable size and length. It should be long enough to give a smooth hip-line. If it is not large enough it will be continually slipping up which adds to the discomfort of the wearer. Shoulder straps
which button to the garment make it easier to keep the straps dainty and clean. A smaller piece of elastic, a couple of inches in length, added to the end of the strap helps to prevent the straps from drawing on the shoulders. Most important of all, have the garment fitted by someone who knows.

Our outer garments may also affect the posture. For instance, the weight of a heavy fur collar will, if allowed to rest on the back of the neck, cause the neck and head to thrust forward. This is one of the most prominent and common defects in posture. If we remember to throw our heavy collars back slightly on our shoulders it will help remedy this defect.

Since posture affects not only our clothing but also our health it might be well to pause here and check up on our postures. Do you lift your chest high as though you were carrying something upon it and let your shoulders fall naturally? This is much better than trying to throw the shoulders back as that means the back and shoulders seem stiff. Hold the head proudly for that is an indication of a thoroughbred. That doesn't mean going around with our noses in the air, either, making our friends think we are "highbrow." It merely means holding the chin up in and, rather than thrust forward in a fatigued position. The back should have a nice straight line. To test this stand against the wall, the heels may be very slightly away from the wall, and place the hand between the back at the waistline and the wall. You should only be able to get the thickness of one hand behind the back at this point but you may find that you could get two or more if you had them, behind your back. In that ease you must get busy if you expect to have perfect health and expect to be good looking in your clothes.

If the back is sway in the pelvic girdle or hip bones are thrust forward, will probably cause some of the body organs to be thrown slightly out of place and if one of these is only a fraction of an inch out of place it affects the circulation, which in turn affects the digestion, respiration, etc.

Now as to what you can do to remedy this situation and avoid all the terrible things I have just mentioned. Clasp the hands in front, just below the waistline, drawing the abdomen in and at the same time lifting the chest. This draws the back of the waistline nearer the wall and decreases the tendency toward a sway back. Next try bending forward from the waistline, letting the arms hang limply down in front of you. This curves the back out at the waistline rather than in. Now rise slowly and when you are back in standing position you will find your back in better position. You will feel very stiff at first and as though you are tilted forward ready to fall on your face. You will overcome this feeling in a little while and do not worry about how you look for you won't look half as queer as you feel that you do. Remember to toe straight ahead when you walk for bending out puts an unnecessary strain on the arches. Toing correctly helps to bear the weight on the outside and ball of the foot rather than on the inside of the foot.

I KNOW you do not have time, as a rule, to do posture exercises, but there are some things which you can do to improve your posture as you go about your daily tasks. If you are sewing, watch your position as you sit at the machine. To avoid leaning over the machine bend forward from the hips. This throws the weight on the outside of the feet and takes some of the strain off the arches. Flex the knees a little as sometimes we keep them in such a rigid position that it is tiring. As you walk around your kitchen working, you can walk pigeon-toed now and then. We must remember that gravity is pulling down on our bodies all the time and it is not always a sign that we are lazy if we slump a little. When we become fatigued we cannot hold our bodies as easily against this pull, so anything we can do as we walk to prevent tiring ourselves is going to improve our posture.

After doing a few of the things I have mentioned, you will probably think of ways of improving your posture which will fit your own individual problem. For after all we are separate individuals who must study for ourselves these three important factors, posture, health, and clothing.