

Shoes

Judging by the number of enquiries we get at HemiHelp, finding suitable footwear is one of the most common problems faced by parents and carers of children with hemiplegia.

Different sized shoes

The most common problem is that the child needs two differently sized shoes. Sometimes the affected foot is smaller, or the child may wear a splint, which requires a longer and wider shoe. Either way you need differently sized shoes, so you have either to find someone who will sell a pair of odd shoes or buy two pairs and hope for a discount. There are also one or two ranges where you can take out the inner soles to accommodate the larger foot or splint. There appears to be no law as to what our children are entitled to. In some areas they get no help at all with shoes, in others they get free shoes/boots up to the age of five and in some lucky places they get one and even two pairs free throughout childhood. Once the child has stopped growing some parents have had an expensive last (mould) made of his/her feet and then had shoes made to measure. These should be rather more comfortable and the cost can be little more than buying two ordinary pairs.

The Disabled Living Foundation at 380-384 Harrow Road London W9 2HU (Tel: 0870 603 9177 Web: www.dlf.org.uk) has a leaflet with a list of suppliers, called Footwear for Odd-sized Feet.

The British Footwear Manufacturers Federation at 3 Portland Place London W1N 3AA (Tel: 01933229005 Web: <http://www.britfoot.com>) also publish a list of companies who do Footwear for Special Needs, including some that do children's and odd sizes.

One parent has managed to get her Social Services department to fund one pair, but as we all know, children's feet can grow alarmingly fast, and so this is only a temporary solution. HemiHelp members often advertise spare pairs of odd sized shoes through the newsletter and the Equipment thread on the HemiHelp message board.

Raised shoes

Some children may need raises on their shoes. These can either be stuck on the sole/heel by the orthotist or fitted inside the shoe. These inner ones are removable and so can be put into different shoes, but the problem can arise that the shoe is then not deep enough and the heel comes out. You can often get around this by wearing boots, but this is not ideal in hot weather.

Fastening shoes

Another problem is fastening shoes with one hand. Our Shoe Lacing page lists the different ideas that parents have tried over the last few years. Also, many orthotists will replace existing fastenings with Velcro.

Shoe fitting

If you are concerned about shoes being properly fitted, the Children's Foot Health Register at Bedford House, 69-79 Fulham High Street, London SW6 3JW (Tel: 0171 371 5185) have a list of Centres of Excellence for Children's Shoe Fitting in the UK (send a large S.A.E. for a copy). Shops listed have trained staff and offer 4 width fittings and half sizes.

Useful companies

The following are just some of the ranges worth looking at:

Buratto boots, shoes and trainers and Duna footwear. Otto Bock UK Ltd, 32 Parsonage Road, Englefield Green, Egham, Surrey TW20 0JW Tel: 01784 438841.

Clarks Shoes Ltd, 40 High Street, Street, Somerset BA16 0YA Tel: 01458 43131

They run an odd shoe scheme on a limited number of styles. You pay the usual price plus 25% and postage and packing.

Hush Puppies Welbeck Gollin/Harris, 43 King Street, London WC2E 8RJ Tel: 0171 836 6677, or ring 0116 280 3500 for your nearest stockists. They have several fittings and you can remove the inner sole to fit the larger foot or splint.

Kickabouts LSB Orthopaedics Ltd, 309 310 Sovereign Road, Kings Norton Business Centre, Birmingham B30 3HN Tel: 0121 451 3016 or 0121 458 2425

Mendivil Footwear, including Bota Boots, Medisport Footwear, Podiabet Shoes and Cat Boots from O & P Services and Chas A Blatchford and Sons Ltd, only available through your local NHS Hospital or Child Development Centre or via a private consultation with one of Mendevil's orthotists. All can be adapted to Velcro fastenings.

Myron Footwear. Remploy Healthcare, Manor Mill Lane, Millshaw, Leeds LS11 8DF Tel: 0113 272 6900. Adult sizes. Velcro fastenings £4.15 extra.

P-F Trainers. Alfred Cox Orthopaedic Ltd, 108 Whitechapel Road, London E1 1JD Tel: 0171 247 1178

Piedro. Gilbert and Mallish Ltd, Alvechurch Road, West Heath, Birmingham B31 3PH Tel: 0121 475 1101. This is one of the most common ranges supplied free to children under the NHS. It costs 25% extra to have an odd sized pair and

approximately £9.50 to have Velcro fitted. They sometimes have old stock on sale at a discount.

Schein have three extensive ranges of shoes and boots, some with Velcro fastenings. Odd sized pairs cost an extra 25%. They also supply products in extra width fittings to wear over splints. Available from Salt and Sons Ltd, Saltair House, Lord Street, Nechells, Birmingham B7 4DS Tel: 0121 359 5123

Starry Trainers. Available from many good retailers.

Start-rite Shoes Ltd, Crome Road, Norwich NR3 4RD Tel: 01603 423841 have ranges at up to 50% discount at Domani Retail Ltd, at either 47 High Street Wimbledon London SW19 5AX or 24 Cambridge Street Aylesbury HP20 1RS. They also stock the Gola Sri range.

Treads. Remploy Healthcare Group, Sheffield Road, Whittington Moor, Chesterfield, Derbyshire S41 8NJ Tel: 01246 450 328

Walkwizard. Ortho Europe, Napier Court, Abingdon Science Park, Barton Lane, Abingdon OX14 3YT Tel: 01235 535 737

HemiHelp has a range of leaflets covering many of the areas touched on above, and also a Useful Names and Addresses List to help you contact other organisations.

HemiHelp

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