

BETTER BAREFOOT

Your shoes are ruining your feet



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In our quest to understand our body and achieve an optimal function as we age we must leave no stone unturned.

That being said, let me ask you a question, do your feet look more like the picture on the left or the right?

Which X-Ray do you think your feet should look like?

The image on the left is one of a person who spends most of their time barefoot whereas the image on the right is someone who is plagued by modern-day footwear.

Our Ancestors did it right

Keeping the theme of using our ancestors as a beacon to which our health and movement practices should align, do you think they spent a lot of time wearing restrictive shoes that made it harder for them to traverse the land while hunting and gathering?

Modern-day shoes have essentially ruined our feet. Humans are a species that developed to be extremely efficient travelers. We used our natural bare feet to move across the entire globe before anyone invented shoes. Now don't get me wrong I am sure there is archeological evidence some of our ancestors had developed something to place under the soles of their feet, however, I am positive they weren't nearly as restrictive as our current selection.

So what's the issue with our feet?

Modern shoes have a restrictive toe box that pushes our toes close together and they have too much arch support. We are essentially putting our feet in a cast every day that reduces the ability of our toes to spread and decreases the action of our intrinsic foot muscles.

Chronic use of restrictive shoes will change our gait patterns, the bone structure, and potentially lead to foot, ankle, knee, hip, and back issues.

I see clients daily who have issues walking, running, jumping, lunging, and squatting with the root cause being their inability to produce and distribute force through their foot and toes.

Let's think about your hands for a second. Can you spread your fingers apart? Can you make a fist and then open your fingers fully? Now try to do the same with your toes...

Try grabbing a hold of and manipulating an object with your fingers pushed together and overlapping each other. Whether you do these things or not you can see my point. Your hand is essentially useless when these constraints are placed upon it.

Our feet are our base of support. Anytime we are standing or ambulating through the world they are our connection to the ground. Without their function, we cannot move, balance, push, or pull effectively.

If we want to ensure that we have a healthy functional body we must pay more respect to our feet.

Barefoot Living

You may be thinking, “So I am not supposed to wear the shoes I have worn for years, but I can’t just walk around barefoot all the time? I’m for sure not going outside barefoot”

Anyone who has spent time in the clinic knows that we all wear these goofy-looking shoes. The running joke now is that I have started a Vivo barefoot cult.

And you all might not be wrong. But!

These shoes have literally changed my perspective on shoes to the point where I will not wear anything else.

The brand of shoes we wear here is not the only brand and many others are becoming more popular nowadays. I will provide some links below to brands that I and others I know wear to keep our feet strong and resilient.

I also wouldn’t be able to leave this article without mentioning that you should be spending time outside barefoot! I could and may write another article on why this is important, especially for our children. It is a major pet peeve of mine when parents place their children in shoes before they are walking (as it begins the restrictive process during a crucial developmental time) and when they don’t let them go barefoot as they learn to walk.

Think about everything I discussed above, do you think kids will learn to be strong, stable, and effective movers if their developmental years are spent in restrictive shoes?

How do you combat years of poor footwear?

For those of you who are the person in the right image, I don't want you to feel that you cannot regain function. There is always hope and an ability to improve in some capacity.

Here are a few places to start and if you feel that you have issues that need more attention please come and see us.

- Spend as much time barefoot as tolerable (around your home and yard)
- Ditch the old footwear and start wearing barefoot/minimalist shoes
- Get a pair of toe spacers to wear while walking around the home and/or while sleeping!

Try these exercises daily!

- Toe Cars
- Foot Doming
- Barefoot Squats, Lunges, and Step Ups (To your own capacity and tolerance)

Barefoot shoe brands

- Vivo Barefoot
- XERO
- Feelgrounds

THANK YOU FOR READING!



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