

How to Buy Hiking Boots to Prevent Plantar Fasciitis



By downloading this book, you've expressed interest in learning about how to purchase hiking boots as a component of preventing plantar fasciitis. I'm Dr. Rion Berg and I've been successfully treating plantar fasciitis for over 40 years. As a podiatrist I know that hikers are more prone to developing this painful condition, which is why I wrote this book. I hope you find the information useful.



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One of the most important things you can do to prevent plantar fasciitis and stop it from coming back is to buy the right hiking boots. If you're downloading this book, you've probably already read my article "[The Definitive Guide for Stopping Heel Pain in Hikers](#)". If not, go back and read it because it's chock full of other information you need to prevent plantar fasciitis or heel pain.

As you probably know, plantar fasciitis doesn't just have one cause. Many factors are involved in its development. Wearing inappropriate or worn-out hiking boots is just one of those factors. In addition, the following factors also add to your plantar fasciitis risk.

- Flat feet or high arches
- Building up your training too rapidly (hiking too many miles before your body is ready for it)
- Tight calf muscles
- Over 40 years old
- Participating in high impact activities like running
- Overweight



The reason I list these here, is it's important to tackle these issues in addition to purchasing the right boots. To get the best picture of how to treat these issues, visit [Plantar Fasciitis Treatment](#) on my website.

Ok, let's talk about the reason you're here—to learn how to buy hiking boots to prevent plantar fasciitis and stop it from coming back.

Why Buying Supportive and Stable Hiking Boots Is Important in Preventing Plantar Fasciitis

If you're like many people prone to plantar fasciitis, you likely have poor foot mechanics. Wearing a stable and supportive boot is the first step in keeping your feet in proper alignment.

Hikers with a flat or low arch tend to pronate or roll their foot inward with each step they take. That pronation is even more pronounced when more pressure is added to the step, which occurs continuously when hiking up a mountain and when coming back down. Each time a hiker pronates more stress is applied to the plantar fascia, the ligament at the bottom of the foot that becomes inflamed with plantar fasciitis.

Hikers with high arches do the opposite, they supinate or roll their foot outward. This can also put stress on the plantar fascia.

How To Choose The Right Hiking Boot

While many people buy their hiking boots online, I don't recommend it. Why? It's very important to get your feet properly measured. Even an adult's feet can get longer and wider. Your foot volume can also change.

It's best to choose a store that specializes in hiking. Their salespeople will know how to measure both the length and width of your feet and can assess your foot volume to help you choose the proper fitting boot. Your boots should feel snug at the heel and you should have plenty of room at the front so you can wiggle your toes. Your shoes shouldn't feel tight. Stores we recommend are REI, Ascent Outdoors Seattle, and Columbia.

Your boot also need to be:

- stable and supportive
- comfortable
- durable, warm, and either waterproof or water resistant
- can accommodate an orthotic or over-the-counter insert

How to Check Shoes for Stability and Support

While most boots are designed to provide the support you need, it's still best to check them before you buy. You can learn to do this by viewing my video, "[How To Check Any Shoe For Stability](#)". Hikers with flat feet should look for boots that have more arch support.



Comfort

While many people want to spend time breaking in their boots, you should never buy a boot with the idea that it will stretch out. Many of the boots today are designed to be comfortable at the start. Spend some time in the boots while at the store. If you can walk up and down some stairs or on an incline this will help with your ability to assess comfort and slippage.

Boots that are for more advanced hiking may be stiffer. The leather will become more pliable as they're worn. Spend some time walking around your neighborhood before you go hiking to avoid blisters.

Durability, Etc

You want your boots to last and keep you warm. Look for boots that are durable (well made leather or exterior) and waterproof or waterproof resistant.

Shoes that Can Accommodate Orthotics or Over-the-Counter Inserts

Most people with plantar fasciitis or who are prone to getting it will need to use an [over-the-counter insert](#) or a custom orthotic in their boots. For that reason, it's important to make sure that the foot bed of the boot you're buying is removable. In addition, it's important to bring your orthotics with you when you shop for boots so that you get the right fit, since orthotics can add volume to your boot.

Other Tips for A Great Fit

Shop At the End of The Day

Because our feet swell as the day goes on, it's best to shop at the end of the afternoon or later to ensure you're getting the best fit.

Try Different Lacing Techniques to Get the Best Fit

Just as with shoes, different lacing techniques can help you get a better fit. For example, if you have a narrow heel and have had a hard time finding a boot that keeps your heel in place, there is a specific lacing technique to help you. [REI has a great video that demonstrates how to tie a "surgeon's knot" to keep your heel firmly in your boot.](#) They also provide great information about how to lace your boot if you are having front of the foot issues like Morton's Neuroma or if your nail is about to come off. They also have a lacing technique to help with pain on the top of the foot.

Buy the Right Hiking Socks

Socks are the next most important purchase you'll make after buying your boots. It's best to purchase your socks at the same time you purchase boots to ensure a good fit. Or try on the boots with socks similar to the thickness of the socks you plan to wear. Here's information about [the best socks for hikers](#). Never wear cotton socks, but instead choose from among the great variety of synthetics that help to wick away moisture.

Buying the Right Boots for Your Hiking Terrain

Assess the type of hike you'll be doing and the amount of weight you'll be carrying before purchasing your shoes or boots. A lightweight hiking shoe may be perfect for an easy day hike with a lightweight pack. A heavy-duty hiking boot will be needed if you're carrying a bunch of weight for overnights, doing hikes with more elevation gain, or tackling rougher terrain.

Go with the lightest boot you can for the terrain you'll be on. Here are some descriptions of three different types of boots by REI.

Hiking shoes: Low-cut models with flexible midsoles are excellent for day hiking. Some ultralight backpackers may even choose trail-running shoes for long-distance journeys.

Day hiking boots: These range from mid- to high-cut models and are intended for day hikes or short backpacking trips with light loads. They often flex easily and require little break-in time, but they lack the support and durability of stout backpacking boots.

Backpacking boots: These are designed to carry heavier loads on multiday trips deep into the backcountry. Most have a high cut that wraps above the ankles for excellent support. Durable and supportive, with stiffer midsoles than lighter footwear, they are suitable for on- or off-trail travel.

Conclusion

Buying the right hiking boots are an essential component of preventing plantar fasciitis and keeping it at bay. But they are only one part of a comprehensive program to keep this painful condition from returning. Review the information on our [Plantar Fasciitis Treatment page](#) to get the full picture of what else you need to do to keep yourself trekking.

If you're still struggling with heel pain, give our office a call at 206-368-7000 or [request an appointment online](#).

