

**MORE THAN 50% OF ALL CHILDREN WEAR SHOES THAT ARE TOO SHORT IN LENGTH**



**SHOES THAT ARE TOO SHORT CAUSE DAMAGE TO CHILDREN'S FEET**

**HELPFUL TIPS FOR CHOOSING KIDS' SHOES AND KEEPING KIDS' FEET HEALTHY**



An initiative of the "Kids: Healthy feet – healthy life" research team  
Commissioned by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Health and the Fonds Gesundes Österreich (Fund for a Healthy Austria)



## ONCE UPON A TIME... (AND EVEN STILL TODAY)



- Recent studies have shown that over 50% of all children wear shoes that are too small.\*
- Ill-fitting shoes are seriously detrimental to the health of children's feet.\*
- Too-tight shoes can also cause further physical damage (for example to the knees, hips and spine), and lead to a reduced motivation to exercise.



## CHILDREN'S FEET ARE SPECIAL



- Kids' feet are very soft and elastic can be compressed and deformed all too easily (for example by wearing shoes that are too tight or too short).
- Going barefoot is the best training for children's feet: Going barefoot exercises and strengthens the muscles of the foot in many different ways. It's also the best way to recover from wearing shoes!
- Kids' feet grow very fast: Between the ages of 3 and 6, children's feet grow at an average rate of about 1 mm (0.04") every month.\*
- Children's feet aren't fully developed until about the age of 16.
- Kids can't tell if their shoes are too small. Even shoes that are markedly shorter than the foot itself are often judged by their little wearers to fit just fine.\*
- That's why it's important to check the fit of your kids' shoes every 3 – 4 months.



## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR KIDS' SHOES TO FIT PROPERLY?



shoes that are too short deform children's feet

- Healthy feet in childhood are fundamental for a further well-balanced development. Not only that, healthy feet make exercise fun!
- Shoes that are too short can permanently deform children's feet.
- Many kids already have markedly crooked big toes, caused by wearing poorly-fitting shoes.\*
- Shoes that are too short in length stunt and delay the healthy development of children's feet.\*

\* Results of the research projects "Children's Feet – Children's Shoes" (2001 – 2003) and "Kids: healthy feet – healthy shoes" (2005 – 2006)



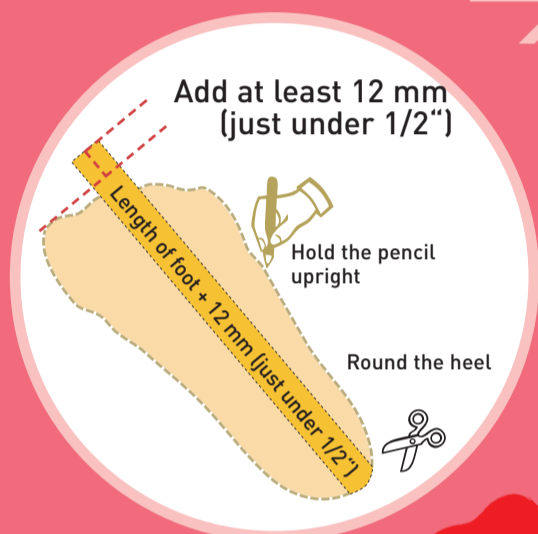
## THE RIGHT FIT FOR KIDS' SHOES



- Feet can be quite moody: Usually the right and left feet are different lengths, they are shorter and narrower in the morning than in the evening, and they're longer when you're standing than when you're sitting or lying down. Feet need the most room when they're in motion: The toes slide forwards with every step.
- Children's feet need at least 12 mm (just under 1/2") of extra space in the toe of the shoe to be able to move unrestrictedly. New shoes can have up to 17 mm (not quite 3/4") extra "wobble room". This way, they should fit well for quite a few months.
- The ideal shoe for children should be soft and pliable.



## TWO WAYS TO FIND OUT IF THE SHOE FITS

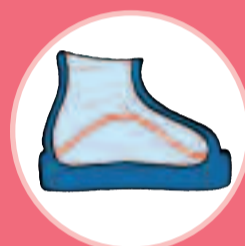


### CARDBOARD TEMPLATE

- Have the child stand on a piece of cardboard and trace the outline of each foot.
- Add at least 12 mm (just under 1/2") to the length of the longest toe (for new shoes, add 17 mm, or not quite 3/4").
- You don't have to cut out the whole template, a strip the width of two fingers is sufficient (see illustration). If the cardboard strip fits inside the shoe, then the shoe is long enough.



If the cardboard strip fits, so does the shoe.



If the cardboard strip buckles, the shoe is too short.



### plus12

- With this handy tool, you can measure both the length of the child's foot and the inside length of the shoe.
- Convenient: The plus12 automatically adds the necessary 12 mm of extra space when measuring the length of the foot.



## QUESTIONS, QUESTIONS...

- **IS IT ALRIGHT FOR MY CHILD TO WEAR SECOND-HAND SHOES?**  
Of course it is. And over 50% of all parents hand down shoes from older children to younger ones. Just make sure the "new" shoes aren't worn down unevenly and that they are long enough.
- **ARE EXPENSIVE SHOES NECESSARILY BETTER THAN CHEAPER MODELS?**  
No. A high price does not guarantee high quality children's shoes.

- **SLIPPERS, HOUSE SHOES OR BAREFOOT – WHICH IS BETTER?**  
Going barefoot is the best option for children's feet. If your child does need to wear house shoes or slippers, make sure they fit well (over 80% of all children wear house shoes that are too short in length...). Our advice: Try non-skid socks. They're better because the foot has more freedom of movement and it's easier to see if the socks fit properly.
- **DO CHILDREN'S SHOES HAVE TO BE STIFF AND PROVIDE A LOT OF SUPPORT?**  
No. If kids' feet are healthy, they don't need any extra support. The ideal shoe for children is soft and pliable, so that the foot has plenty of freedom of movement.