

# Dr. Colin Gage

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*"treating the cause of your problem, not just the symptoms"*

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## How Do Your Shoes Wear?

Not a day goes by that I don't have a patient in my office asking what is wrong with their feet? Often, they think they have a problem just because the outsides of their shoes wear out so much faster than the inside. If the worn spots are in the proper areas, it can be quite normal. If they are in the wrong spots, it can mean that there are serious problems with your feet. To know what is normal, you will have to know how the foot normally functions.

As you begin to walk, one foot will step forward and the heel will contact the ground. Normally, the outside half of the heel touches the ground first. This is why one of the most worn areas on your shoes will appear at the outside half of the heel. If the wear spot is on the inside of the heel, there are definitely problems with the mechanics of your feet. Once the heel is in full contact with the ground and the rest of the body is moving forward, the middle part of the foot will lower towards the ground. The middle of the foot should contact the ground on the outside portion first. Finally, the front portion, or ball, of the foot will then contact the ground.

Now that your entire foot is touching the ground, the next phase of walking occurs. This is called the "propulsion" phase. The muscles in the back of your lower leg contract and your heel lifts off the ground. Most of the force of the push-off occurs at the ball of the foot and big toe.

Allow me to summarize all of this for you. If you walk normally, the pattern of wear on your shoes should be fairly consistent. At the back of the shoe, the most wear should occur at the outside half of the heel. In the middle of the shoe, the wear should occur on the outside half. In the front portion of the shoe, the wear should occur at the ball and big toe area. Compare the wear pattern of your shoes to how I have described it. If it is not very similar, you may have problems with your feet that can also lead to pain in the feet, knees, hips or even the low back. If done professionally, a "custom orthotic" may correct your foot problems and relieve other symptoms at the same time. If you have questions about the wear pattern on your shoes or require custom orthotics to correct an existing problem, feel free to call my office.

