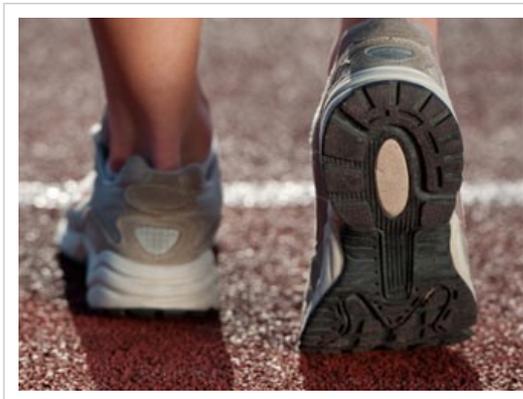


## Do Toning Shoes Work?

BY LISA JAFFE HUBBELL • POSTED AUGUST 9 2010 AT 2:30 PM

I remember going to the drugstore every summer to pick up a \$10 pair of [Dr. Scholl's](#) wooden soled sandals, guaranteed to tone your legs before school starts. They still exist, but run about \$50 and have been joined by a growing number of toning shoes – FitFlops, MBTs, Easytone and AviaMotion, among others — that claim to burn more calories than regular shoes, tone your calves and trim your butt. Science only supports some of the claims.



Some doctors have recommended rocker bottom shoes to specific patients for years, says [John O'Kane](#), MD, associate professor of orthopedics at University of Washington School of Medicine and the head team physician for the university's sports teams. Most of the time, it has been for patients with sore and stiff ankle joints.

The most studied are the [MBTs](#). The science isn't the peer reviewed kind that makes medical journal headlines, but O'Kane says it's pretty solid. "The studies show that they increase the work of walking – they make it harder like walking on the sand is. If they increase the work, then they increase the calories burned." However,

there are studies that suggest there is no difference. In late July, the American Council of Exercise released a [report](#) based on a small study that showed no statistical difference between regular running shoes and a few varieties of rocker bottom shoes in terms of calorie burn or muscle activation.

There are some claims that the shoes can relieve back pain, and O'Kane says research could prove that true. "People who walk in them have an ankle more flexed to the floor, and the pelvis rolls back and reduces lumbar [lordosis](#). That's linked to back pain. It's not a stretch to extrapolate that these might help." There is also anecdotal evidence that people who stand for long periods of time find these shoes make those long stretches on their feet more comfortable, but O'Kane says that neither claim has been proved by science.

With the increase in manufacturers and availability, however, O'Kane has concerns – among them is buying these shoes without talking to someone knowledgeable in the store, or doing it on line without even trying them out. "These shoes are less stable, and while they may improve balance over time, they could be risky for people at increased risk of falling."

So who are these for? Medically speaking, for people with tired legs and sore feet, O'Kane says. "I wouldn't put weight loss at the top of the list unless this is what will get you moving."

Connect the dots:

The [MBT](#) costs from about \$100 to over \$200. [Sketchers](#) cost about \$100 a pair, less for the flip flop version. [Reebok Easytone](#) run about \$100 a pair, or \$60 for the flip flop. [Avia Motion](#) shoes cost \$80-120 per pair. [FitFlops](#) come mostly in sandal styles and cost \$50-60. There are few good peer-reviewed studies. The most [recent](#) relate to issues such as [stance](#) and [ankle problems](#). More information from an unbiased source is available from the [Academy of Podiatric Sports Medicine](#).

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### 4 COMMENTS

 **Terry Kennedy**  
great to see all the interest in validating and raising the bar to innovation in such a simple solution sought... Yes I would expect more as the credible footwear will bear the weight of providing research and weighted studies further...  
We have just completed a study with Balance Walking vs Regular Walking – this study covered the several physical and physiological effects of the Chung Shi shoe when used with and without Walking Poles  
Posted August 10 2010 AT 8:39 am

 Lorraine

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Where could I get a pair of Dr. Scholl's sandals, I haven't seen them around in many years. Can you get them in Canada?  
Thanks  
Lorraine K

Posted August 10 2010 AT 9:17 pm

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**trish thomas**

I have a pair of the Dr. School's sandals and have worn them every day since I got them. I have been able to walk a lot more than I was for the previous year without the pains I had been feeling. I have some slight lordosis.

Posted August 11 2010 AT 10:49 pm

**CONTACT US**

Share your ideas at:  
[contact.healthymagination@ge.com](mailto:contact.healthymagination@ge.com).



**Sharon London**

I was glad to see an article on this as more and more I see these shoes in stores and on the street and have wondered if I should not get them also. After reading this, I think not. I don't have back issues, don't stand for long periods of time and don't have ankle issues and certainly don't want to fall. So thanks for the information. It was very helpful.

Posted August 16 2010 AT 1:55 pm

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