

SELECTING SHOES FOR CHILDREN

If the shoe shop has X-ray equipment, it should be used to check the width and length while the child is standing. However, other methods may be used; for example, the child stands on a piece of cardboard longer than his foot and a pencil mark is made on the cardboard at the end of the longest toe and another at the back of the heel. A strip of the cardboard about $\frac{1}{2}$ in. wide is cut out of the full length between the two marks. This is inserted in the shoe, and when one end is pushed up to the toe the other end should be $\frac{3}{4}$ in. to $\frac{1}{2}$ in. short of the back of the shoe.

The inside line of the shoe should be straight along the inside edge right up to the big toe; then the greatest length will be at the big toe instead of at the third toe as happens in pointed shoes. The width, length, and height above the toes should be such that the toes can move naturally when the child is walking or standing.

Heels should be flat; even teenagers' walking shoes should have low heels. High heels force the foot forward into the toe of the shoe and produce the same effect as insufficient length. The weight that should be taken by the heel is thrown forward on to the ball of the foot and this tends to enlarge the toe joint. If at the same time the shoe has a pointed toe, the effect will be emphasised and will produce bunions in later life. High heels also cause posture defects, because they upset the natural balance of the body.

In warm weather it is good for children to be barefooted on sand, grass, or anywhere where they are not likely to hurt their feet, but if a child is having foot treatment necessitating specially made or built-up shoes, he should wear them all the time.

A child should not be expected to wear shoes handed down from an older brother or sister, because it is unlikely that the two children's feet will be so similar that the one pair of shoes is a good fit for both children.

CONSTRUCTION

Research has been carried out on shoe construction, of which there are two main types, welt and stitch down. The latter method is used generally in sandals and the cheaper shoes. One disadvantage is that where the insole is glued rather than stitched in place considerable curl and deformation can occur if the soles get wet. In welt construction the insoles are sewn down and show better resistance to such deformation.

The best leather soles have been found to be better than any of the synthetics, since all the synthetics tend to spread or creep. Sometimes the creep is serious enough to break stitches and loosen the sole.

The counter, the concealed stiffener at the back of the heel between the outer leather and the lining, is most frequently made of fibre board instead



Well-made, well-fitting sandals for a 10-year-old.

of leather. This is no disadvantage; fibre board retains its shape excellently.

CARE OF SHOES

Very few children give even a passing thought to being careful with their shoes. Usually these are subjected to really hard wear and any care the shoes receive is given when they are off the feet.

Wet shoes should be wiped with a damp cloth to remove mud and then dried at room temperature. They must not be dried by heat of any kind, because heat dries out oil from the leather and causes it to crack. Damp shoes should be stuffed with paper to help keep the shape and dried in a draughty place. When dry they should be cleaned with polish before being worn.

Regular cleaning after each wearing helps to preserve the leather and prolong the life of the shoes. Any wear that calls for repairs will be noticed on shoes which are cleaned frequently before the shoes become badly worn. Toe caps and heel plates give a certain amount of protection to outdoor shoes, but these should be inspected regularly and renewed when they have

worn thin. Nasty cuts and tears can result from jagged caps or plates.

SHOES TO SUIT THE WEATHER

Children need shoes to suit the weather: Stout leather shoes for winter with goloshes or gumboots for wet days and sandals for summer or indoor wear. Goloshes and gumboots are for outside wear only and should be removed in the house or classroom, as they do not allow perspiration to escape and thus keep feet colder than need be in winter.

IMPORTANCE OF CORRECTLY SHAPED SOCKS

Incorrectly fitting socks can do much permanent damage to the shape of children's feet. If the socks are tight or too short, they exert gentle but steady pressure, particularly on the big toes. As the bones of young feet are still sufficiently flexible to give way to such steady pressure, a permanently deformed foot can easily result. Loose socks of the right shape can be as important as the best shoes obtainable in preventing later foot troubles.