

## **Soccer Cleats**

### **Proper fitting, care, and injury prevention**

*Information provided by Nirschl Orthopaedic Center and Virginia Sportsmedicine Institute*

They say the shoes can make the outfit, but in sports it is the cleats that can make or break the athlete. No one piece of equipment will affect your game as much as your cleats. Cleats protect your feet, give you traction on slippery grass, facilitate your running and give you extra leverage while shooting and passing.

Select and try on the right style of cleats starting with your normal shoe size. Depending on the brand you may need to go up a half size or more. When trying on cleats walk around the store to see if the soccer cleats are rubbing or feel excessively tight. Leather stretches after wear, but just a little bit. True leather or the new microfiber synthetics breathe better and decrease sweat and potential blisters. Some players like their toes at the tip for more feel of the ball, where others like room in the toes. It is important to choose fit over looks.

If you wear an orthotic (a shoe insert to provide added support), or plan on putting an extra insole in the cleat, you may want to purchase a brand that is known to have a wider cut like Adidas. When sizing a soccer shoe, remember to bring all the accessories that you will be wearing during the game, like shin guards, braces and most importantly, socks, to accurately gauge the shoe's fit. Make sure to take some time to break in the cleats before you wear them to play in a game.

At Virginia Sportsmedicine Institute, the physical therapy clinic of Nirschl Orthopaedics Center, we have observed that the lack of arch support in soccer shoes can lead to an increased risk of ACL tears. Therefore we recommend athletes, especially females, get custom orthotics or over-the-counter insoles called Super Feet Black in the low profile design that will fit better in to soccer cleats. In addition, there has been some discussion that there is a higher rate of knee injuries with bladed square cleats vs. studded rounded cleats due to the increased traction and decreased rotational component of square cleats.

If you are buying cleats for a child, you may be tempted to buy them a little big. However, this is not always a good idea. Unlike everyday shoes, cleats are going to be worn in some of the most active moments, when a shoe not fitting properly may not only compromise performance, but significantly increase the chance of injury. Even a slight chafe can become a problem in ninety minutes of game play, and cleats will likely be worn out before they are outgrown. Younger players who are still growing may be lucky to get a spring and fall season out of their shoes. In reality you will probably need to replace shoes each season at a minimum due to normal wear and tear and the conditions of play.

The perfect pair of cleats can be difficult to find, so once you find them, you will want to learn to maintain your cleats. First, they should only be worn on the soccer field during games and practice sessions. Wearing them walking on sidewalks or home flooring can wear them down and cause them to be uneven, throwing you off balance and putting you at a high risk of injuries from falls.

After each wearing, brush the dirt off the bottom and sides and wipe them with a damp cloth, then rub shoe oil into them. Finally, loosen the laces and put newspaper in the cleats to help the shoes dry out. These simple steps will give your cleats a long life and keep them in good working condition.

Nirschl Orthopaedic Center is a leader in sports medicine and general orthopedic services. In addition Virginia Sportsmedicine Institute physical therapy has been rated one of the top sports medicine clinics in the area. If you have an orthopaedic injury, schedule an appointment with one of our doctors today by calling our Arlington, VA location at (703) 525-2200. Visit our websites at [www.nirschl.com](http://www.nirschl.com) and

[www.vasportsmedicine.com](http://www.vasportsmedicine.com) to learn more about our services. For more info on orthopaedic issues visit our blog at [www.nirschlorthopaedic.com](http://www.nirschlorthopaedic.com)