

# Stick to supportive shoes if you have knee pain

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A randomized controlled trial found that sturdy supportive shoes improve knee pain on walking and knee-related quality of life compared with flat flexible shoes. This evidence supports recommendations that previously had been based on expert opinion in the absence of data. Findings are published in *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

Knee osteoarthritis is a common problem that causes pain and can limit a person's activities. People with [knee osteoarthritis](#) are often advised to wear stable supportive shoes. However, some experts believe that flat flexible shoes that allow more of a "barefoot" experience may provide more benefit.

Researchers from The University of Melbourne randomly assigned 164 patients with knee osteoarthritis to wear either sturdy supportive shoes or flat flexible shoes for at least six hours per day for six [months](#) to compare pain and the ability to participate in activities, such as walking. The participants were equally divided into the two groups and the researchers used standard surveys to measure patients' pain, activity levels, and quality of life at the beginning and end of the study. At six months, the researchers found no evidence that flat, flexible shoes were better than sturdy supportive shoes. Patients in the stable sturdy shoe group reported greater improvements in pain when walking and knee-related quality of life compared to the flat flexible shoe group.

According to the researchers, these findings provide hard data to support clinical guidelines that recommend sturdy supportive shoes for patients with knee osteoarthritis.

**More information:** Kade L. Paterson et al. The Effect of Flat Flexible Versus Stable Supportive Shoes on Knee Osteoarthritis Symptoms, *Annals of Internal Medicine* (2021). [DOI: 10.7326/M20-6321](https://doi.org/10.7326/M20-6321)

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