

A Stitch Here and There By Phil Moore

In many ways running shoes have become the "new age orthopaedic shoe". With mesh uppers and features focused on foot biomechanics, some of the most challenging pathologies are managed well with a good jogger!

Patients can now choose an extra depth running shoe over the traditional and lackluster taupe orthopaedic option. Not all shoes, even those with the deepest mesh uppers are always capable of managing hammer toes and bunions 'seamlessly'.

When fitting a patient, we often find a shoe that fits most areas of the foot well except one spot where an overlay is getting in the way. Going to the next width up means losing the fit in the rest of the shoe and doing so also tends to compromise overall support and stability.

What to do?

Well...there is a great little trick that you can do in the office or in the shoe store to help make that style fit perfectly! On many mesh uppered running shoes there are vinyl overlays which are there to provide a nominal amount of structure and support. They can actually detract from the fit, especially in the case of the arthritic or diabetic foot. In many cases toes or joints protrude, requiring a bubble patch or significant stretch modification. This proves to be frustrating because 95% of the fit is perfect. However, with a \$3 stitch remover and a sharp pair of scissors the toe box can be customized in 5 minutes!

Here's how:

Many of these overlays are stitched down and can be easily removed.



Simply unstitch the unwanted vinyl piece, while making sure to not clip the mesh toe box. Most overlays are not glued down, so when removed, there is little or no mark left on the shoe. Make sure that the nylon is the same on both sides of the overlay, otherwise there may be a flat joint seam underneath, making the modification more noticeable (it's not the end of the world, it's just not as

pretty).

In the case of the New Balance 840, a popular multiple width extra deep runner, taking the overlays off has been The Answer for some of the most challenging arthritic and diabetic feet.

As seen in the picture below, the overlay was removed to accommodate a Tailor's bunion.



In the case of a 3rd toe corn because of a hammer toe, the small "sway bar" on the lateral toe box could be removed as well.

For some extreme arthritic cases, all of the overlays can be removed to make a complete and seamless nylon toe box!

Some shoe designers are becoming more aware of these various foot challenges and are making efforts to keep pace with the demands of our aging population.

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Take for instance the all new New Balance 3040 pictured below. It is a stretchable and seamless shoe designed and marketed specifically for the Diabetic foot. Note the accommodative toe box.



Hopefully more shoe makers will follow this lead with unobtrusive overlays and intrinsically stitched support bars and seamless toe boxes.

Until thenNo need to send the patient to the local cobbler for a shoe modification. Just consider unstitching a few overlays and make that toe box Just Right!