Toning shoes? Good or goofy? [1]

Dear Alice,

I was wondering whether or not toning shoes actually help you be more physically fit.

Thanks,

Trying to be Toned

Answer

Dear Trying to be Toned,

Think it?s time to cancel your gym membership and invest in a pair of toning shoes instead? Not so fast. The current evidence on toning shoes is controversial. Manufacturers claim that lacing up can help people lose weight and tone buttocks, legs, and abdominal muscles. It turns out that the claims surrounding such products don?t have a leg to stand on.

Since they first arrived on the scene, toning shoes have become very popular and are manufactured by many different brands. Athletic shoes are often designed with support and cushioning in mind, whereas toning shoes are engineered specifically to create instability. The idea is that this instability forces the wearer to engage stabilizing muscles further than regular athletic shoes, which results in greater toning of the buttocks, legs, and abdominal muscles.

Some researchers have found that no increase in calorie expenditure or muscle toning results from wearing the shoes. There is even concern that wearing the shoes might alter the gait of their users and could lead to an increased risk of leg and ankle injuries. Companies that produce toning shoes, however, cite research and testing that they have commissioned to back up their claims. Companies also recommend wearing toning shoes for short periods of time for non-vigorous activities.

In 2012, the nation?s consumer protection agency, the Federal Trade Commission, forced several companies to reimburse consumers for making implausible claims. The lawsuits that were filed against some makers of the toning shoes claimed the shoes did not fulfill their promises or caused injury. While these companies have toned down their claims, toning shoes are still on the market. If you?re looking for a way to tone up, toning shoes probably won?t help you be more physically fit than any other shoe. But if you think a brand new pair of kicks will encourage you to walk or become more physically active, whether they are toning shoes or not, it?s a good first step. If you decide to go the toning shoe route, however, take care to be mindful of injury (you may even want to consult with your health care provider.
before making a purchase).

If you are looking for more opportunities to be physically active in your new kicks and you are affiliated with Columbia, CU Move [2] is an initiative that offers the University community opportunities to learn about and engage in physical activities that support healthy living.

Keep trying, Trying to be Toned!

Alice!
Category:
Nutrition & Physical Activity [3]
Fitness [4]
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Published date:
Oct 05, 2012

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