

# Elderly people who choose the wrong shoes have a lower quality of life

March 2 2017

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Credit: Plataforma SINC

As people get older, they experience changes in their foot morphology. If they do not change their shoe size along with these transformations, older people—most of whom choose the wrong shoes—suffer, among

other things, anxiety, apathy, loss of balance and falls, according to a study by the University of A Coruña.

In 2015, a research team led by the University of A Coruña conducted a study of people with a mean age of 80 years. They analysed whether the changes to foot morphology that occur in [elderly individuals](#), and their tolerance for pain, led to subjects wearing the wrong shoes. They concluded that the majority (83 percent) did not choose the correct size, and that they often should have been wearing a different size for each foot.

As Daniel López López, a scientist at the University of A Coruña who led this study, tells SINC: "In this stage of life, there are changes in foot morphology involving increased width and length, as well as changes in [pain tolerance](#) linked to age, and the loss of muscle mass and fatty tissue in the feet."

The study has for the first time analysed the consequences of this poor shoe choice on the health of elderly individuals. "Because of people's lifestyles at this age, they often use shoes that are harmful to their feet. This, combined with the appearance of chronic diseases such as obesity, vascular diseases, diabetes or rheumatoid arthritis, causes a worrying increase in foot problems in elderly people of between 71 percent and 87 percent. This means having to seek medical and podiatric attention more frequently, as it affects their functional capacity and quality of life," the scientist explains. The study is published in the *Revista da Associação Médica Brasileira*, the Brazilian Medical Association's journal.

### **Decreased independence and well-being**

The participants in this research project were volunteers from the Podiatry University Clinic at the University of A Coruña with a mean age of 75 years.

Their results demonstrate that [elderly people](#) who use the wrong shoes have a lower quality of life in all areas related to pain, foot function, footwear, food health, general health, physical activity, social capacity and vitality.

The most common disorders are foot bone deformities, bunions, toenail malformations, plantar keratosis and flat feet. "This often leads to chronic pain, infections, limited mobility when walking, anxiety, apathy, social disturbances, changes to pressure distribution in feet related to loss of balance and falls, which as a result negatively impact upon health, independence and well-being," López informs us.

These individuals should use proper footwear, including wide-fit shoes with velcro or straps, rubber soles to prevent slipping and falling and those that reduce the impact on joints when walking.

"Additionally, regular visits and monitoring on the part of a podiatrist helps to prevent, control and reduce the appearance of [foot](#) diseases and deformities, increase autonomy and, in summary, improve people's quality of life," López concludes.

**More information:** Daniel López-López et al. Impact of shoe size in a sample of elderly individuals, *Revista da Associação Médica Brasileira* (2016). [DOI: 10.1590/1806-9282.62.08.789](https://doi.org/10.1590/1806-9282.62.08.789)

Provided by Plataforma SINC

Citation: Elderly people who choose the wrong shoes have a lower quality of life (2017, March 2) retrieved 18 March 2023 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2017-03-elderly-people-wrong-quality-life.html>

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