

Weekend Doctor

By **DR. THOMAS F. VAIL**

When it comes to a sport that provides lots of family fun, few can match a trip to the bowling alley. More than 50 million people go bowling each year.

Most people consider bowling an injury-free sport, but injuries do occur, and stress and strain on the feet can lead to problems throughout the body. The repetitive slide with each throw in bowling is the main cause for added pressure on your feet and it can cause injury if done improperly.

Foot injuries are a lot like back injuries in that they cause a lot of pain during routine tasks that are normally taken for granted. Injuries can be caused by going into the slide wrong and twisting too much, which puts a lot of torque on the leg. This is especially true if your slide foot is angled to the right while you are trying to slide straight. This can cause strain and sprain in the ankle, and repetitive abuse can cause stress fractures.



Vail

Bowling shoes are the most overlooked piece of bowling equipment. Many bowlers just don't realize the importance of a good-quality and comfortably-fitting bowling shoe.

The left and right bowling shoes offer subtle differences with one being used for sliding and the opposite foot for braking. These varying pressures on different parts of the foot can cause irritations such as blisters and calluses, or even Morton's neuroma, which can be quite painful.

A proper and consistent slide is very important in the execution of a good bowling shot. The athletic or tennis shoe-style bowling shoe is made with a "sliding sole" on both shoes to accommodate left or right handed bowlers. These are considered to be entry-level shoes and an excellent choice for beginners or for bowlers who bowl once a week or less.

The other shoe has rubber on it to assist the bowler in a strong and stable "push off" into the slide. This type of shoe is recommended for bowlers that want to improve their game and for bowlers who bowl more than once a week.

The competitive style shoes are sold with replacement heels and soles for the sliding foot to allow a bowler to adjust their slide distance by changing the slide sole and/or the heel pad on the sliding foot.

Therefore, if a bowler is having problems with their slide on a certain approach condition, this shoe will allow the bowler the ability to conquer that issue. They are designed to be worn several times per week. These shoes definitely provide more support at the foul line due to the broader base and firmer fit around the ankle.

Proper footwear and also arch support is critical in bowling, which is why I recommend custom-molded orthotics with your bowling shoes.

With custom-molded orthotics, the arch will be supported and take pressure off the joints. They will feel like a part of the shoe and be designed specifically for your foot.

With the latest high-tech materials, such as dual-layered memory foam, custom molded orthotics provide maximum shock absorption without taking up a lot of room in the shoe.

You also want to make sure that the top covers are resistant to bacteria, mold and fungus.

Wearing a good set of bowling insoles will not only provide shock absorption, it will also prevent fatigue and improve the bowler's foot comfort. A good set of bowling insoles can also help improve a bowler's coordination which can improve their approach and their scores.

Remember to always prepare for your bowling game by doing a good stretching routine of "toe raises" and "step drop."

Bowling is a fun sport. The proper shoes and insoles will provide better coordination and comfort and keep you injury free.

Vail is with Advanced Footcare Clinic, Findlay. Questions for Blanchard Valley Health System doctors may be sent to weekend@thecourier.com, or to Weekend, The Courier, P.O. Box 609, Findlay, OH 45839.