

## **Toning shoes: all hype or do they work?**

(source: KSN.com)

WICHITA, Kansas -- They're a hit on market right now -- so-called toning shoes that claim to shape muscles, improve posture and lead to weight loss by stretching muscles with each stride. But with some pairs costing hundreds of dollars, are they worth the expense?

Hair Stylist Amanda Hoffman paid about \$100 for her Sketcher Shape Ups. But she didn't buy them for their intended purpose, rather for comfort since she spends a lot of time on her feet.

"They're great," she said. "I don't have blisters or anything else at the end of the day."

While the shoes work for her, they aren't for everyone. Since the fitness footwear has a rocking chair design, foot care specialists say it may not be suitable for people with balance problems or foot ailments.

"Not every rocker sole shoe works for every person," said Kathy Klitzke, a certified pedorthist and owner of Foot Solutions.

Klitzke knows how to fit shoes and says most people can wear the toning or rocker-sole shoes, you just have to find the proper match for your feet.

"If those ankles don't look straight, if they tip at all one way or the other, the shoe is not appropriate," said Klitzke.

To demonstrate what she's talking about, Klitzke uses one of her employees. Anna Scheibmeir's feet noticeably lean toward her big toes, especially her left one. Scheibmeir tries on three different types of rocker-sole shoes. In the Reebok Easy Tone, her left foot still leans. And that's the same case with MBT's. In the Chung Shi, her left foot still collapses toward her big toe, but Klitzke says it's not as bad because the Chung Shi offers more support than the other toning shoes.

Klitzke says when you're wearing the appropriate rocker-sole shoe, walking should be effortless. Podiatrist Dr. Benjamin Weaver agrees.

"Most shoes you shouldn't have to break in, they should fit from the get go," he said.

But if the toning shoes don't fit properly, it could lead to pain not only in the foot but all the way up the back and to the shoulders. Dr. Weaver says if you already have inflammation in the back of your foot, it can cause your achilles tendon to rupture and that's 6 months worth of treatment that goes along with

that. And if you already have foot ailments like Scheibmeir, the improper fit and continued use of a toning shoe could make the problem even worse.

“If you wear it too long and it's doing damage, then it's a real challenge to get recovered from that,” said Klizke.

But if you wear the right shoes for your feet, Klizke says you will get the results you're looking for.

“They can in fact tone and strengthen the body. You do have to wear them an awful lot to get the benefit of the toning and strengthening,” she said.

“It's not a magic pill, it's not going to make you lose pounds and pounds,” said Dr. Weaver. “Probably if you didn't have that extra donut and walked around the block you'd get the same amount of exercise with them.”

For Hoffman, the rocker-sole shoes have improved her posture and most of all, helped her feet feel at ease while at work.

“I could probably walk in them literally morning to night and be just fine,” she said.

It's a \$100 she would make again, though doctors say you should do your homework so your health doesn't pay the price.

The shoes, depending on the brand, can run anywhere from about \$30 to \$300. If you decide to buy them, doctors recommend using the shoes no longer than 20 minutes at first and gradually building up.