

Pilgrim Shoes: Delivering Good-Fitting Shoes to Accommodate Diabetic and Orthopedic Needs

By Jeanette Smith

According to General Manager Arkady Altskan, Pilgrim Shoes' mission is simple: "Our business is to deliver good-fitting shoes in different widths to accommodate diabetic and orthopedic needs." And that's exactly what they have been doing for thirty-five years.

Pilgrim Shoes started as a small shoe shop in Ukraine in 1988. Eventually, this shop grew into a factory with over two hundred employees, producing many popular styles. With the prospect of helping an even wider audience, the business was moved to Baltimore in 1997, when it began focusing on the diabetic community.

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sive variety compared to the competition," Arkady says. "One of our main benefits is having many different varieties to satisfy many different tastes while still complying with Medicare regulations. Everything is reviewed."

Pilgrim Shoes goes way beyond what many people envision as orthopedic shoes. Their styles include walking shoes, winter boots, summer sandals, dress shoes, and more. Each style is specially designed with unique features to ensure comfort, accommodation, and protection.

The Features

While differing widely in style, their shoes offer enhanced features for diabetic patients and those with other orthopedic needs. Features include:

- *Dry Fast System*: Interior fabrics are designed to release moisture faster, so your shoes and feet stay dry. This can reduce the risk of fungal infections such as athlete's foot.
- *Three Widths & Full and Half Sizes*: It's simple: more sizes equal a more customized fit. Customers can find the exact right size and shape for their unique foot structure and needs.
- *Added Shaft Height*: The shaft is the height of the shoe from the top of the heel to the lip of the collar. By adding depth here, customers can easily substitute a thicker insole and not feel like their heel is slipping out of the shoe.

- *Foam Cushioned Collar*: The collar sits around the upper heel at the back of the shoe, and it's important that this particular spot does not rub or cause sores. The foam collar allows for comfort and accommodation while hugging the heel securely.

- *Removable Triple Density Insole*: These insoles are comfortable and supportive enough to be worn on their own, but they are also removable to accommodate custom orthotics and devices.

- *Padded Tongue*: Additional padding in the tongue protects the top of the foot from the pressure of the laces. This can be particularly helpful to patients with high arches.

- *Added Depth to Toe Box*: Whether hammertoes or bunions, added depth in the toe box will accommodate foot and toe deformities.

- *Stretchable Leather*: Genuine leather offers a supple stretch to supply additional comfort while remaining durable.

- *Lightweight Sole*: The double-rocker sole is made of lightweight materials to avoid the fatigue of a heavy shoe. The motion it creates assures safe movement and walking.

- *Fiberglass Shank*: The shank (extending from the mid-heel to the ball of the foot) is made of sturdy yet lightweight fiberglass, which adds stability and strength to the shoe, helping to correct overpronation.

- *Extended Medial Heel Counter*: By creating an extra-long heel counter that wraps the foot more, this feature provides rear foot walking stability and support.

- *Seam-Free Linings*: The absence of seams inside the shoes is critical for diabetic patients and others who need to avoid friction and pressure. Inner linings are also highly breathable.

These features are standard in most of their shoes, the assortment of which changes constantly. "Every season we make something new," Arkady says. "It's very difficult to do because we carry shoes in three widths, so [we] have to maintain a variety of sizes and widths every time we create something new."

Pilgrim's quality is guaranteed. And they are members of the American Orthotic and Prosthetic Association (AOPA) and the Pedorthic Footwear Association (PFA).

The Shoes

When it comes to popular styles from Pilgrim Shoes, there are many. "We have a wide range of products for the winter—fashionable boots for men and ladies," says Arkady. "For the summer, we have many sandals. I don't think you're going to find our wide selection elsewhere."

Pilgrim Shoes *(continued)*

Some Popular Women's Styles...

First, meet Claire. It's a loafer/wedge hybrid with an accent buckle over the mid-forefoot. This ladies' dress shoe comes in



Claire

eight colors of full-grain leather upper with fabric lining. It's extra lightweight with a removable insole.

Next up—Alexandra. This Mary Jane-style shoe with flower pattern cutouts comes in simple black or beige full-grain leather. The removable insole allows those who



Alexandra

need it to use their own orthotics or inserts.

Finally, there's Grace. This athletic shoe offers mid-foot Velcro support for easy donning and doffing.

The mesh upper comes in black, berry, or grey with a soft fabric lining. The stretchable upper is perfect for patients who need more room to accommodate foot deformities such as hammertoes. The lightweight design means no leg or foot fatigue, and slip resistance adds to the safety of this walking shoe.

All of these ladies' shoes come in three widths (M, W, WW) and are available in sizes 5-11. They are also approved as A5500 for diabetic patients and L3216 for orthopedic footwear.



Grace

Some Popular Men's Styles...

Up for the men's team is Marvin. This Velcro walking shoe is perfect for a stylish gentleman who wants a practical shoe to wear all day. It comes in either brown nubuck or black leather. The extra depth of the shoe provides room for inserts or orthotics.



Marvin

Of course, you can't go wrong with Richard. Made in rich black or brown leather, this dress shoe offers hidden depth, a lightweight sole, and a supportive fastening

over the midfoot. This allows wearers to adjust the shoe based on their specific needs.

And then there's Force. This classic athletic shoe offers a stretchable upper mesh and quick-tie bungee laces for easy adjustments. Their slip resistance means sure stepping no matter your activity.



Richard



Force

These men's shoes come in three widths (M, W, WW), are available in sizes 7-13, and are approved as A5500 for diabetic patients and L3216 for orthopedic footwear.

Get Involved with Pilgrim Shoes

"We do not sell directly to customers as a retail [operation]," Arkady says. "We only sell to professionals because we believe that our shoes have to be properly fitted. People often think they're wearing a certain size, but they're not, or it's not the right width. We are committed to maintaining our reputation and our high standards."

If a customer contacts Pilgrim Shoes directly, they send them to the closest local specialist (which could be you!). "Podiatrists can order online," Arkady explains. "It's the most convenient way with your log-in. You order, and we ship. Northeast usually gets it the next day. South gets it within three days. And California will get it within a week. In short, we are pretty quick with our shipments." Their website shows real-time, in-stock availability so you'll know when something isn't going to be available.

Arkady says that "With every [podiatrist] there's a little bit of a learning curve as they get to know how the shoes fit. DPMs can easily arrange a meeting with the sales rep, who will provide them with some insights regarding which styles are more popular because they're popular for a reason."

In the end, Pilgrim Shoes is not just another brand. Pilgrim offers superior fit and quality that customers will see and feel. *For more information about getting involved with Pilgrim Shoes, contact Arkady Altspan at 410-277-8855 or click here.*



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