Runners’ insoles ‘are useless’ at stopping injury

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Shock-absorbing insoles used by runners to reduce impact injuries do not work, according to a study of clinical trials.

The soft insoles are often used to prevent injury and manage existing musculoskeletal conditions, but the research concluded that they were ineffective at both.

Daniel Bonanno, of La Trobe University, Melbourne, said: “Regular physical activity is known to provide health benefits, but exercise-related injuries are common. Among long distance runners and physically active defence force personnel, injuries ranged from 19 to 79 per cent.”

These included stress response fracture of the shin bone, Achilles’ tendon, plantar fasciitis — severe heel pain — and knee pain.

The study, published in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, looked at 11 clinical trials relating to contoured foot orthotics, which are used to redistribute pressure and alter gait, and seven that had evaluated soft shock-absorbing insoles. It found that the insoles did not lessen the risk of any type of injury and one trial suggested that they increased the risk.

Mr Bonanno said: “Foot orthoses were found to be effective for preventing overall injuries and stress fractures but not soft-tissue injuries, while shock-absorbing insoles were not found to be effective for preventing any injury.”