

Be Kind to your Feet



Shoe Shopping

When shopping for the right fit, look for:

- A low heel. Avoid high-heeled, narrow, or pointed-toe shoes. High-heeled shoes increase pressure on the front of the foot and on the toe joints. If you cannot avoid wearing pumps or high-heeled shoes, choose shoes with heels that are no more than 2 in. (5 cm) high.
- A wide and deep toe box (the area that surrounds the toes). There should be about 0.5 in. (1.3 cm) of space between your longest toe and the end of the shoe. You should be able to wiggle your toes in your shoes.
- A rigid yet cushioned heel counter that keeps your foot from slipping out of the shoe.
- A flexible sole that allows your toes to bend as you walk.
- A shoe that allows the ball of your foot to fit snugly into the widest part of the shoe.
- A lace-up shoe rather than a slip-on shoe. Athletic shoes are a good choice.
- Shoes that breathe when your feet sweat. Avoid plastic or vinyl shoes.
- Shoes that do not have seams that may rub against or irritate the skin over your foot problem.

Source: WebMD

When it comes to fashion, it's been said beauty is pain. But there is nothing pretty about hammer toes, bunions or broken bones from high heels. The American Orthopaedic Foot and Ankle Society reports that 88% of women are squeezing into the wrong size shoe because it was the last pair on the shelf, or because the store doesn't carry that size. But this action can cause life-long damage in the feet.

There are simple solutions to make that favorite pair of pumps, flats and boots safe for your entire body, from the toes to the back. These are tips you can't ignore.

High heels. According to the American Orthopaedic Foot and Ankle Society, wearing high heels for longer than three hours a day can actually shorten the length of the Achilles tendon — and can lead to loss of motion in the feet over-time. High heels may be the most obvious offender for aching feet.

"Heels can really do a lot of damage to not only your feet but your knees as well," said Terel S. Newton, MD, a board-certified anesthesiology

and pain relief specialist at Pain Relief Centers in Pinellas, Fla. "Your body weight is actually shifted forward, taking the hips and spine out of alignment and causing extra strain on your knees. Stilettos have been known to lead to osteoarthritis, ankle sprains and other painful problems."

To avoid this, aim for a lower, wider heel that will more evenly distribute weight. Newton also suggests adding a cushion insert to ease any joint pain in the ball of the foot, called metatarsalgia.

Flats. Flats may look like the best option, but be careful. "Most flats don't have enough arch support, leading to pain in your knees, hips and back," Newton explained. Women can also experience a painful condition known as plantar fasciitis — when the band of tissue on the bottom of your foot that runs from your heel to your toes becomes inflamed.

There is a simple solution: orthotic inserts. "By adding this to your flats, you create the needed arch support and put all your joints in alignment," Newton said.

Shoes that are too small are one of the biggest culprits of foot pain. A too-narrow toe box, along with heel height, can lead to Morton's neuroma — pain and numbness in the third and fourth toes. "Don't be tempted to buy a shoe in

a smaller size if they are out of yours. This decision can lead to bunions, blisters and even joint damage," Newton warned. It's best to get a foot measurement to ensure proper size.

Also, if the shoes hurt in the store, they will absolutely hurt in the long run. "Your feet are too important to suffer through any 'break-in period' for style," said Newton.

Bottom line, be kind to your feet and they will be kind to you. ■

This handout was provided by Florida Pain Relief Centers, a network of multispecialty practices offering treatment for neck and arm pain, back and leg pain, complex regional pain syndrome, degenerative disc disease, failed back syndrome, herniated discs, and spinal stenosis. Visit www.pinellaspain.com or call 727-518-8660.

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