

The Run Down on Foot Health

By Susan Locke, M.D.

Those stilettos on your feet may look good, but is your lower body paying the real price? From back pain and hip pain to calf pain and knee pain, being fashionable may cost you more than you bargained for.

Visually, it's no secret that a woman's posture is impacted by heels. The center mass in the body is pushed forward, causing the hips and back to become misaligned. Calf muscles contract, shorten and tighten to accommodate the angle of the foot. Excess force is placed on the knees. A study at the University of Virginia even documented an increase in knee pressure of as much as 26 percent.

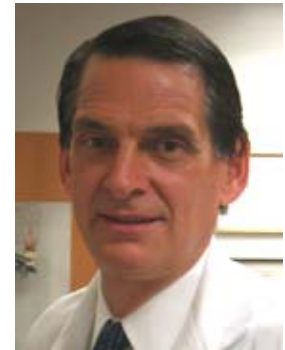
Beware of the numerous foot problems linked to high heels and ill-fitting shoes:

- Corns and calluses – thick, hardened layers of skin develop in areas of friction
- Toenail problems – ingrown toenails and nail fungus
- Hammertoe – the muscles in the 2nd, 3rd and 4th toes become bent and unable to straighten
- Metatarsalgia – increasing pressure on forefoot results in pain on the ball of foot
- Morton's Neuroma – thickening of tissue around the nerve between the 3rd and 4th toe can cause pain and numbness in the toes
- Pump bump (Haglund's Deformity) – bony enlargement on the back of the heel.
- Bunions – a bony growth on the joint at the base of the big toe

For more information, I turned to **Jonathan T. Deland, M.D.**, Chief of the Foot and Ankle Center at **Hospital for Special Surgery** in New York and recipient of the 2009 Healthnetwork Service Excellence Award.

What are the most common foot and ankle problems you encounter?

The most common problems include bunions, arthritis of the big toe and ankle joint injuries.



Jonathan T. Deland, M.D.

Are there problems that tend to affect men more than women?

More men are affected by arthritis of the first metatarsophalangeal (MP) joint and traumatic injuries.

What can you do to prevent these problems?

Problems can be prevented by shoes which accommodate the foot and have some cushion.

What is the primary cause of foot problems?

[Foot problems] are primarily genetic but also influenced by shoe type.

What is the typical recovery time of foot/ankle surgery?

The average recovery time is 6 – 10 weeks.

Do you have any general advice on the topic of foot and ankle or orthopedic health?

Use well-cushioned shoes! If you have pain and problems with alignment, get it fixed in a good position.

Whether you are walking the streets of Paris or simply moseying down Main Street, remember to wear supportive shoes. And should you need to see an orthopedic specialist, call Healthnetwork today. Healthnetwork partners with some of the top orthopedic centers in the country to ensure all your foot and ankle needs are addressed by the best.

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