

Women's Health Research Institute

Putting Women First

March 2014

In This Issue

Foot Health: Emphasizing Health Over Fashion

Health Tip: Avoid Foot Problems

Institute Happenings

Upcoming Events

Related Blogs

[Healthy Feet are Happy Feet](#)

[High heels and foot problems](#)

[Shoes in the News--Does Fashion Trump Safety?](#)

Dear Friend,

Although the cold winter is very much still present and persistent, March has indeed arrived! The season is approaching when those bulky snow boots get tossed to the back of the closet and heels and flip flops start making their return.

This month we want to give our feet the care and respect they deserve. With the average American taking 5,117 steps a day (approximately 2.5 miles), we owe it to our health to start wearing footwear that will help prevent permanent injury and still provide us with variety and style for our everyday roles.

Sincerely,

The Institute Staff

Foot Health: Emphasizing Health Over Fashion

Foot health is not typically known to be a "hot topic" in the media. As Americans, we live such active lives, and yet how much do we really know about our footwear

and how it's affecting our everyday health? It's important to stop seeing shoes as a mere fashion statement and start seeing them as a beauty tip; the better your feet look and feel, the better your health will be. And remember, just because the shoe fits, does NOT mean you should wear it.

Today's Footwear Fashion



These stylish heels may look harmless, but the real harm is in how they shape our feet. This type of shoe is what the American Podiatric Medical Association likes to call "shoe-icide."

As much as we feel we are shaping our shoes or "breaking them in," *they* are the ones shaping *our* feet, and not in a healthy way. Between the pressure and rubbing of your heel against the shoe, you create what is known as the "pump bump," a very painful knot on the back of your heel. This pressure against the heel can also cause blisters, swelling, and bursitis (inflammation between a tendon and a bone). Once the bump is formed it will be permanent. Temporary relief can be brought by applying ice, purchasing orthotics, or applying heel pads, but the only permanent option for pain relief is to wear better shoes.

This kind of tip-toed positioning of our feet also effects the ball of our feet. When wearing heels all of the pressure and weight from our bodies go directly to that point in our feet. Putting that much pressure on the balls of our feet as well as our toe joints can cause inflammation and there have been some cases where hairline fractures occurred.



With shoes like this, who needs enemies. They may look sweet, but having a thin heel is THE biggest risk factor for dangerous footwear. Balancing weight on such thin heels automatically raises your risks of twisting or spraining your ankle. All other injuries or foot deformities caused by heels develop over time, but a twisted or sprained ankle can render your foot in a cast immediately.

Many think that the solution to high heel pain and dangers are shoes known as ballet "flats." Although this shoe has no immediate effects such as twisted ankles or toe inflammation, it is the silent killer of shoes. Ideally our feet have natural arches, flat soles do not allow optimal foot function and therefore cause issues such as knee, hip, and back problems. Flip flops also fit in this category of flat-soled shoes and can expose your feet to other injuries such as scraping, since there is no outer shell to protect your feet. Also keep an eye out for overstretch, tearing, or inflammation of the plantar fascia (the tissue that runs at the bottom of your feet).





Bunions are one of the larger issues caused by improper shoes. Pointed toe shoes are the main cause. Whether they are high heels or flats, pointed toes are not the way feet are meant to be shaped. Squeezing one of the widest parts or your foot into a pointed narrow shape causes damage ranging from bunions, that can only be fixed by surgery, to bruising under the toe nails from the constant pressure.

Platforms at times tend to be a go-to heel since it eliminates most balancing issues, gives the height, and the look of any other. However, this shoe is a game changer. The platform uniquely throws off the way our feet are designed to function. This particular shoe has unique ridges at the bottom. This prevents your foot from bending the ways it needs and this can create damage to the metatarsal bones which are located in the middle of your feet.



Tips to Surviving Foot Fashion

- Some heel height isn't bad, it's going to extremes that can cause serious damage. It is, of course, important to pay attention to the natural shape of our feet, which is why staying lower to the ground with a 2 inch heel is much healthier.
- Substitute fashion heels for "performance pumps" which are made with reinforced heels, athletic shoe construction, and more wiggle room for your toes.
- Select boxier toed shoes instead of pointy.
- Invest in orthotic inserts that can provide your foot with extra cushion and arch if you have flat feet or wearing flats.
- If you must wear high heels, be sure they have a thicker heel to increase balance and avoid ankle sprain.
- Make sure you are getting your foot measured before purchasing any kind of shoe. The wrong size shoe can mean more foot damage.

Although the high heel has been known to exist starting around the mid 1500's, we are now learning of all the health effects they have. Knowing the causes and preventative measures of these health issues, as well as using moderation in shoe shopping are important factors to keeping your feet healthy.

It is impossible to have or find the "perfect" shoe that allows your foot to function as it should constantly, although clearly some are better than others. It is important to be educated on how that shoe causes your feet to function and find ways to implement corrections for the use of that shoe. This could mean getting inserts for flats or simply staying away from constantly using certain kinds of heels. If your environment requires you to wear heels often, please give your feet a break every chance you get or be active in finding better and healthier alternatives.

Sources

1. [WebMD](#)
2. [The New York Times](#)
3. [American Podiatric Medical Association](#)

Author:

Christina Arroyo, Program Coordinator, Women's Health Research Institute

Health Tip: Avoid Foot Problems

It's never too late to start taking care of your feet. We encourage you to start as soon as possible! Simply understanding what to avoid when buying shoes is the trick. Consider the following and feel the difference in every step.



Wear good athletic shoes, such as shoes with cushioned soles (especially heels) and good arch support. Physical therapists, orthopedists, podiatrists, and sports medicine health professionals can advise you.



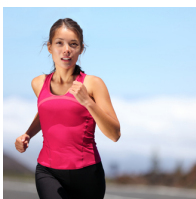
Buy new shoes every few months, because padding wears out. Also buy new shoes if the tread or heels wear down. The expense is worth preventing ongoing (chronic) foot or ankle problems.



Stretch your foot, ankle, and leg muscles before and after exercise.



Avoid rapidly increasing the number of miles you run, running or training uphill, and running on hard surfaces, such as concrete.



Avoid excessive sprinting (short, rapid bursts of running).

Avoid sudden changes in your training program. Gradually increase the amount of exercise you are doing until you reach your training program goals.

Source: [WebMD](#)

INSTITUTE HAPPENINGS

Success for The Women's Health Research Institute Benefit Performance Event of *The How and The Why*



The Women's Health Research Institute shined the spotlight this weekend with a greatly admired benefit performance of *The How and The Why* at TimeLine Theater. The event benefited the Women's Health Research Institute's programs to continue advocating women in STEM education. Due to such a positive response, there will be a follow-up event: *Women in Academia: Analyzing STEM Female Faculty with TimeLine Theatre*.



Click [HERE](#) to visit the Women's Health Research Institute site



Women in Academia: Analyzing STEM Female Faculty with TimeLine Theatre, March 25, 2014

The Women's Health Research Institute, in collaboration with TimeLine Theatre, is hosting an evening panel discussion and reception to discuss the themes in *The How and the Why*, a play about science, family, and survival of the fittest. At a time when

women hold less than 18% of science faculty positions in higher education, a closer examination of the role of women within academia must be addressed. This event is open to the public and FREE, however registration is required due to limited seating.

Click [HERE](#) for more information and to reserve your seat today.

The Women's Health Science Program is Accepting Applications for Summer 2014

This accomplished citywide STEM education program is looking forward to the beginning of WHSP 2014. We are now accepting applications for high school students as well as medical student mentors. The WHSP application deadline for 2014 is Monday, May 12, 2014. The Summer 2014 WHSP academy will be held from 8:00am-4:00pm June 23-27. Additionally, there will be an orientation on Friday, June 20th. Applicants must be available for the full week of WHSP in order to apply. For further details please click on the respective application.

Click [HERE](#) for the CPS student application.

Click [HERE](#) for the Medical Student Mentor application

UPCOMING EVENTS

Monthly Forum: Tuesday, March 18, 2014 Susan E. Quaggin, MD Discussion on Kidney Functions in Women

Women in Academia: Analyzing STEM Female Faculty with TimeLine Theatre March 25, 2014

[Forward email](#)



Try it FREE today.

This email was sent to b-cushing@northwestern.edu by womenshealthresearch@northwestern.edu | [Update Profile/Email Address](#) | Instant removal with [SafeUnsubscribe™](#) | [Privacy Policy](#).

Northwestern University | Inst for Women's Health Rsrch | 30E E Superior St, Lurie 10-121 | Chicago | IL | 60611