

See The Podiatrist



Proper-Fitting Shoes: A Step In The Right Direction

(NAPSA)—An estimated three out of four Americans experience foot problems in their lifetime—and women have about four times as many foot problems as men.

Common foot ailments

A lot of women's foot ailments are the result of poorly fitting shoes and high heels, although some sources are congenital. Some common problems include:

- **Bunions**—Big toe joints go out of alignment and they become swollen and painful. Wearing narrow, pointed-toe footwear aggravates this condition.

- **Plantar fasciitis**—An inflammation of the connective tissue, which runs from the heel to the ball of the foot, called plantar fascia, causing foot pain.

- **Metatarsalgia**—Generalized pain in the forefoot area, often caused by wearing high-heeled, narrow-pointed shoes.

In general, feet are susceptible to fungal infections that can result in itching and burning. Fungal infections under toenails can make walking, standing and wearing shoes incredibly painful. Foot and toenail infections are often contagious, and can be spread on floors, on carpets and even in the bathtub or shower.

Heels and your feet

High heels have been known to cause knee pain, back pain as well as foot problems. Heels shorten calf muscles and prolonged wearing of heels causes changes to the shape of the feet and may impair



Comfortable, proper-fitting shoes can help prevent foot problems.

normal foot function. Wearing of high-heeled shoes causes increased pressure buildup in the forefoot area. This results in forefoot pain and the formation of corns. Wearing a lower-heel shoe helps to distribute the pressure experienced by the foot.

Pregnancy and pronation

Due to the natural weight gain during pregnancy, a woman's center of gravity is altered. This causes a new weight-bearing stance and added pressure to the knees and feet. Two of the most common foot problems experienced by pregnant women are overpronation and edema. These problems can lead to pain at the heel, arch or ball of the foot.

Overpronation, also referred to as flat feet, can create extreme stress or inflammation on the plantar fascia. This makes walking very painful and can increase strain on the feet, calves and/or back.

Edema, also referred to as swelling in the feet, normally occurs in the latter part of pregnancy.

Picking the right shoe

- Buy shoes in the afternoon, as feet tend to swell during the day.

- The length of your shoe should be a thumb's spacing from the longest toe to the end of the shoe.

- Buy shoes with a fastening (laces, buckle), with a wide heel base and no more than 1¼ inches in height.

- The widest part of your foot should correspond with the widest area of the shoe.

- Shoes with firm rubber soles and soft leather uppers are preferable.

Take foot health seriously; if you suffer from dry skin or brittle nails and want your feet to look and feel better, visit a podiatrist to learn more about preventing and treating foot problems.

Steps for healthier feet

- Wear properly fitting shoes.
- Keep your feet cool and dry.
- Avoid wearing the same shoes two days in a row.

- Always wear shoes in public areas, including hotel rooms and health clubs, to avoid getting an infection.

- Use a disinfectant spray regularly to kill germs in your shoes.

- Use only sterile pedicure instruments.

To learn more about treating foot problems, see the podiatrist.