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Putting Your Best Foot Forward

Posted By *Dee Ann MacBride* On February 18, 2016 @ 5:12 AM In Health | [Comments Disabled](#)

We're not doing our feet any favors. That's abundantly clear by looking at all the new spring shoe displays that line department stores . It's also clear if we've spent just five minutes catching up with news out of the trendy Fashion Week in New York City.

Sky-high heels, pointed toed shoes, heavy platforms, flats and flip flops are some of the worst types of shoes for our feet and always have been. Yet they continue to be some of the most popular styles lining store shelves and showing up wherever trendy people travel.

After all the advice that's been out there for years, still think style is worth the sacrifice?

The American Podiatric Medical Association says 77 percent of Americans will experience foot pain at some point in their lives. But an even greater number, 83 percent, of those who suffer from chronic foot pain say the condition has restricted common daily activity for them as they've aged.

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Women experience foot problems 4 times more often than men do, and that may be because 9 out of 10 report wearing shoes that are too small for their feet. Sound familiar? The practice means more than half the women in America have bunions, a common foot deformity in which the joint that connects the big toe to the foot gets larger and juts out. Bunions aren't pretty. They limit the type of shoes you can wear unless you opt for surgery, and they can also severely limit the mobility of your foot overall.

On top of all that, a 2011 study published in the journal *Arthritis Care & Research* found that among the thousands of participants, those with bunions were more likely to experience pain in other parts of their body. That includes the hip, knee, lower back, and foot.

[lz_bulleted_list title="Healthy Feet Habits" source="www.apma.org"]Opt for lower heels|Wear smart shoes|Stretch your feet and ankles daily|Raise legs to reduce swelling|Get a foot massage routinely|Minimize high-impact exercise|Consider your weight|Seek help for pain[/lz_bulleted_list]

Those with the most severely deformed big toes had the poorest scores on measures of life quality, like social and physical functioning as they grew older.

If it were not for problematic feet, the APMA reports that 39 percent of people say they would exercise more, while 41 percent say they would participate in more activities. And before you blame your genes, only a very small percentage is due to heredity. The rest is due to neglect, improper care, and those ill-fitting shoes.

Dee Corsentino, 53, told LifeZette, "I learned the lesson of wearing the wrong shoes the hard way. I loved my flip-flops and wore them year round. My podiatrist and chiropractor both told me this was what was causing my foot and back pain. I ignored their advice to stop wearing them. Then out of the blue, I was hit with lower back muscle spasms, which left me bedridden for a week and out of work. Now I wear proper shoes and take much better care of my feet as I get older."

Dr. Elizabeth Klawitter, a second generation podiatrist who heads Mid Plains Podiatry in Omaha, Nebraska, says Tarsal Tunnel Syndrome (TTS) is most common among her patients right now.

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"One of the most misdiagnosed cases I see in my office is TTS, which is very similar to Carpel Tunnel Syndrome. Symptoms include burning and tingling sensations in the toes, heel, arch, ankle, and even into the calf. The pain is usually not relieved with rest and may be painful at night," Klawitter told LifeZette.

Possible causes include edema, ganglions, fat, varicose veins, trauma, bone spurs, muscle impingement and foot deformities. Don't wait to get treated, advises Klawitter; there is an easy outpatient procedure that provides relief within 24 to 48 hours.

If surgery is necessary, it's generally a very simple procedure. Patients usually experience immediate relief afterward and normally are back into their regular shoes in 3 to 5 days.

"Most often I am told that the post-op pain is insignificant compared to the pain before surgery. Some of these people have been suffering with pain for decades. They are put on oral meds and believe they have to live with the pain. When I make the diagnosis and the patient gets relief, it gives me a sense of accomplishment," she said.

Healthy feet can allow you to live a fuller life. That includes spending more time outdoors, exercising, playing with your grandchildren and traveling more.

"I was born with flat feet," said Jim Nelson, 73, from Syracuse, New York. "As a young adult the condition worsened and led to continuing foot pain and some difficulty walking. I've had to wear different size shoes my entire life and have spent a lot of money to care for this. Today I'm dealing with infections that have continued to keep me from walking. I have to wear a soft cast for weeks at a time. If it were not for my podiatrist, I would be in worse shape."

"People suffer with pain for decades," said Dr. Klawitter. "We are given a set of feet to get us around. Keep them healthy."

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