In Women’s Shoes, Pain Does Not Equal Gain

NewsUSA

(NU) - High-heeled shoes can make a woman feel beautiful, confident, sexy and powerful. They can also cause pain, deformities and a lifetime of damage to the feet.

Doctors with the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons realize that most women won’t chuck their Jimmy Choos for sensible sneakers. But surgeons say women can reduce their risks for foot problems, including surgery, by following three recommendations: Avoid shoes with pointed toes, avoid heels taller than two inches and recognize foot pain as a warning sign.

High-heeled shoes crowd toes, force the body's weight onto the ball of the foot and disrupt body alignment. Potential consequences:

- Bunions. High heels do not cause bunions. Most women who develop bunions can blame their ancestors for passing down a faulty foot structure. But over time, wearing pointed-toe high heels can make bunions worse. Only surgery can correct this often painful deformity.

- Hammertoes. High-heeled shoes that crowd the toes together can contribute to hammertoes. This deformity occurs when smaller toes become bent, like a claw. This can cause constant shoe friction, leading to painful corns. Severe hammertoes may require surgery to relieve pain.

- Corns. Corns usually form from repeated pressure on the skin. Women with foot deformities, such as hammertoes, often suffer from corns because the tops of the bent toes rub against shoes.

- Haglund’s deformity, or “pump bump.” Pump-style shoes often cause significant pain by irritating a bony deformity some women have on the back of their heel, called a “pump bump.” This problem is common in young women who wear high heels almost every day. In many cases, it can lead to blisters, bursitis or Achilles tendonitis.

- Neuromas. Pointed-toe and high-heeled shoes are the leading causes of painful neuromas in women. High-heeled shoes may force toes into the toe box, which can compress and swell nerves in the foot. Without treatment, a neuroma can lead to permanent nerve damage, making it difficult to walk without severe, shooting pain.

- Back pain. That old song, “The leg bone’s connected to the thigh bone...The thigh bone’s connected to the hip bone...” tells the whole story. Wearing high heels disrupts ankle, knee, hip and lower back alignment.

Most foot surgery patients are women. But not all high-heel foot problems require surgery. Successful non-surgical treatments can include changes in shoe wear, padding, orthotics and pain medications.

To learn more about foot pain, visit FootPhysicians.com.