



BACK FACTS: High Heels

Not only can those brand new high-heeled shoes cause pain in your feet, they can cause low back pain as well. In fact, poor footwear can cause difficulties in the feet, knees, hips, low back and all the way up the spine. Generally, the best shoes for your body are relatively flat and provide adequate support for your feet. However, there are times when higher heels are desired! Here are some tips for those times.



Shopping for shoes

Shop in the afternoon or evening, as your feet tend to accumulate fluid and swell throughout the day. What may have been comfortable earlier could now be tight.

Choosing a shoe

1. Make sure to select the correct shoe size and measure both feet. It is not uncommon to have different sized feet. Stand-up when taking measurements as your feet expand when standing.
2. Not all shoes are created equally. The same shoe size can have different fits depending on the manufacturer. Make sure to try several sizes to find the most comfortable shoe. Walk around the store with both shoes on and see how your feet feel.
3. Choose a heel height that you can walk in gracefully. The effect of a high heel is easily negated by a clumsy walk.
4. Try to choose a shoe with a heel height of no more than 2 inches. It's a good compromise height that will still create the arched posture associated with high heels without sending you tipping out of them.
5. To maximize stability without sacrificing the look of a slender heel, choose a heel that has a narrow silhouette when viewed from the side and a broader base when viewed from the back. Stiletto heels provide very little support.
6. Try to avoid buying a recessed heel, as it is one of the most unstable heel styles. This is where the heel is indented from the back of the shoe.
7. Avoid shoes with many thin straps, as these tend to dig into your skin causing pain and swelling. If the straps are too tight, they can also cut your feet.
8. The material used to make the shoe can also make a difference. Leather or nylon mesh allow for more breathing and flexibility in the feet.
9. Avoid buying shoes that you feel need a break-in period. Shoes should be comfortable from the first time you put them on.
10. Ensure that the shoes have good support for the arches of your feet. If not, an arch support can be used in a closed shoe.

Give your feet a fighting chance

1. Place a cushioning pad into the front of the shoe to pad the balls of your feet. This will also help keep your toes from getting wedged into the front of the shoe. High-heeled shoes slant the foot forward and down at the same time, bending the toes up. This can cause shortening of the Achilles tendon and tightening of your calves.
2. Take a break from your shoes now and then. Slip-off your shoes discretely and stretch some of the tensed muscles. Wiggle your toes and make circles with your ankles to help increase circulation.
3. Try not to stand or walk for long periods of time. If you are wearing high heels to work, put them on when you get there. Wear walking shoes or runners on your way there and home again.
4. Maintain good posture while walking. When standing, your head, shoulders, hips and ankles should line-up, one comfortably above the other. Your knees should be slightly bent and your feet should be shoulder-width apart or more. Great posture and a graceful walk will make more of an impression than teetering on a heel that's too high!

The next day

After a hard night on your feet, give them a break. Wear a low comfortable shoe the next day to rest your muscles. Soak your feet in warm water or give them a nice massage.

Finally

Exercise regularly and try to maintain a healthy weight. Being overweight adds extra stress on your feet, knees and back.

Canada's chiropractors – here to help

Chiropractors can help prevent back and foot problems. A chiropractor can prescribe and provide orthotics if indicated. Should you suffer stress and strain from your high heels, a chiropractor can also provide treatment for your pain.

Fact: 80 per cent of Canadians will suffer from back pain in their lifetime. If required, a chiropractor can treat your pain through a variety of methods. These can include: spinal and joint adjustment, modalities such as ultrasound or TENS, soft tissue therapy and therapeutic exercises.

For more information or to locate a chiropractor near you, please visit the Canadian Chiropractic Association website www.chiropracticcanada.ca.

Remember: The lower the shoe, the more you can do.

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