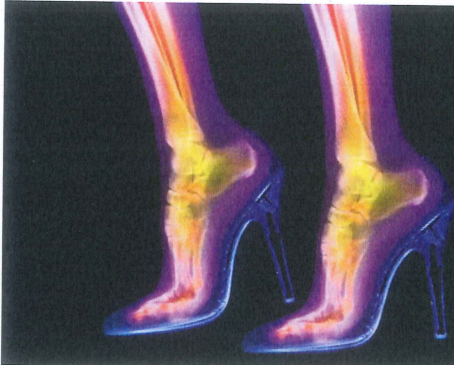


# High Heels Without the Pain



Christian Louboutin once said, "The higher the heels, the better!" Well, not quite. Foot pain amongst women is considered a common phenomenon today and the problem can be attributed to the prolonged use of ill-fitting shoes or footwear that forces the feet into unnatural shapes. Statistics have shown that one in 10 women wear high heels at least three days a week and more than 30 per cent of these women have fallen at least once while wearing heels. Although regarded as a fashion statement, high heels which are 2-inches or higher are generally not encouraged for frequent and extended use as they pose to be the major cause of foot problems in women.

## 1. High Heels & Muscle Aches

Think of our feet as the ultimate shock absorbers for our body, cushioning us from endless days of activities. Now think about squeezing these precious absorbers into an awkward pair of high stilettos and walking around in tip-toeing manner, for a big part of the day. High heels force the feet in an abnormally flexed (downward) position, thus straining the calf muscles and limiting our ankle movements during activity. In order to compensate for the awkward position, the foot muscles tend to "overwork." Ladies may complain of feet and calves' aches or even knee pain after a long day of wearing high heels. With the feet constantly pointing downwards in a flexed position, you tend to lean backwards to compensate for balance. This overarching of the back creates a lot of strain on the lower back, hip and knees.



Bunion and curly toes in a heel wearer

## 2. High Heels & Toe Problems

Most high heels have a narrow front. Ladies may find that they have to "squeeze" their feet into high heel shoes especially if they are flatfooted or have a broad shape to the feet. This constricts the toes into a narrow space. A common foot ailment amongst ladies would be painful callouses (hard skin) and bunion deformity. Occasionally, some ladies may even develop claw toes, with the toes digging down into the soles of your shoes and creating painful calluses.



### 3. High Heels & Heel Pain

When a lady is walking around on high heels there is lot of point pressure on the heel, giving rise to plantar fascia inflammation. The plantar fascia is a structure on the sole of our feet that's helps to maintain our arch and help with toe push-off. Some women may present with heel pain. There is also a lot of stress on the toes and with repeated walking and pushing off on heels, there may a chronic stress injury to the metatarsals (toes). These are stress fractures and patients may present with foot swelling and pain.



### 4. High Heels and Ankle Problems

With the heel and ankle high off the ground, maneuvering uneven surfaces may be a challenge to some women on high heels. They may easily sprain their ankle. Sometimes even making a quick turn may pose a problem. This is particularly a problem to some women who may have lax ligaments or pregnant ladies. There is also a lot of force passing through the ankles and repeated loading on the ankle may lead to cartilage overload and injuries to the ankle cartilage.

### 5. Do You Have To Give Up Heels?

Wearing of high heels occasionally for meetings or dinner outings is fine if balanced with an appropriate use of other comfort footwear. There is generally no rule on the advisable high heel height as it really depends very much on the person's height, build and foot shape. Alternating the shoe choice from one day to another is another alternative. If you are regular high heel wearer, take time everyday to stretch your calf muscles & feet.

Occasionally some the shoes may require a supportive orthotic. The requirement for an accommodative or even a corrective orthotic is done after an assessment with x-rays and scans. You can consult a Foot & Ankle Specialist surgeon to get an assessment.

### 6. What can you do?

It is advisable to get medical assessment if you have painful hard skin in the foot or if you think that you have either flatfeet or high arched feet. Getting the appropriate shoes or insoles after an assessment can go a long way in taking care of your bones and tendons of the foot as well as keeping you comfortable.

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