

Killer shoes

Someone once said that heels are one of the cruelest inventions of man. He's probably right.



Women's World
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STILETTOES, pumps, strappy heels, wedges, espadrilles and platforms. What do these all have in common?

Well, they're objects of desire for most women, obviously. If diamonds are a girl's best friend, shoes come in a close second.

But let's be honest - these shoes are also torture devices for our feet. We squeeze our toes into the narrow points, arch our heels unnaturally and wreak havoc on our posture.

As we totter around unsteadily on these still-lettoes, we convince ourselves that a little discomfort is worth it, as long as we look good. Or is it?

Research is increasingly demonstrating that poor footwear contributes a great deal to foot, joint and posture problems. In fact, we don't need science to tell us this - common sense tells us that there are bound to be problems when we force our feet into unnatural positions and place great stress on them.

Abused and misunderstood

Did you know that the average person takes 5,000 to 10,000 steps a day? And each time your foot hits the ground, the force on the foot is about 50% greater than your body weight. When you run or jump, the force is more than 150% greater than your weight.

All this is thanks to our two little feet, but we don't really give them the credit they're due. Our feet do a lot more for us than we realise. They support our body's weight and also propel our body forward as we walk, run or jump.

Unfortunately, most of us only pay attention to our feet when they hurt, which is quite often! It is said that three out of five adults suffer from painful feet due to a variety of foot conditions.

Common foot problems include bunions, hammertoes, calluses and corns, flat feet and high arches. Some foot problems are exacerbated by medical conditions, such as

obesity, diabetes, arthritis or poor circulation.

Foot pain can also be due to acute injuries caused by accidents or trauma. These injuries may include broken bones, muscle strains, sprains, and joint dislocations.

At the same time, ill-fitting footwear not only leads to foot injuries, but posture and joint problems as well. The wrong kind of shoes can cause you to stand or walk incorrectly, resulting in loss of muscle tone in your core muscles. When your core muscles aren't strong enough, it can eventually lead to back, neck and joint problems.

Love those Manolos and Vincis?

Why are women's shoes so bad for them? High heels, in particular - whether thin stilettos or chunky-heeled - are simply designed to be bad for women.

Walking on high heels puts abnormal stress on both the front and the back of the knee. This kind of repetitive stress to the knee elevates the risk for osteoarthritis.

If you wear high heels for a long time, the tendons in your soles will eventually shorten - and then you reach a point where it's only comfortable for you to wear high heels, creating a vicious cycle of pain causing more pain.

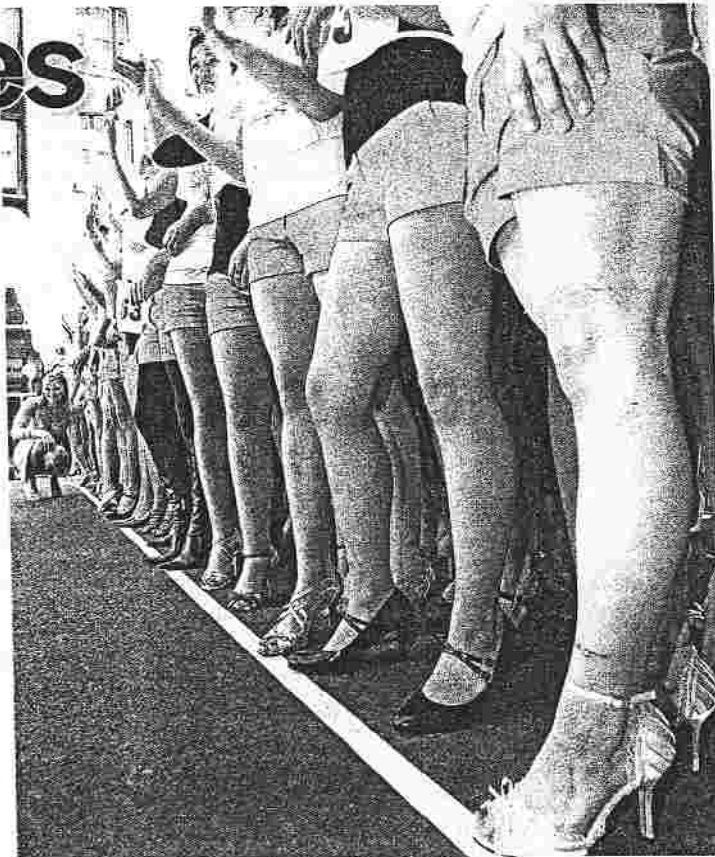
Some research also shows that other types of flat shoes may also be bad for us, such as certain athletic shoes that are heavily padded.

A 1997 study by researchers at McGill University in Montreal found that the more padding a running shoe has, the more force the runner hits the ground with.

This is because we instinctively plant our feet harder to cancel out the shock absorption of the padding.

When our feet hit the ground with more force, it places more stress on the knee - leading again to the risk of osteoarthritis.

The effects of osteoarthritis may not surface until many years later in your life, by which time you may need injections or surgery,



Common sense tells us that there are bound to be problems if we force our feet into unnatural positions and place great stress on them - AFP

Walk this way

If high heels are bad for you, and so are flat padded shoes, then what are you to wear? Going barefoot certainly isn't an option.

The trick is to choose your footwear wisely. Invest in comfort and durability, not fashion.

Here are some general tips to remember when you go shoe-shopping:

- Wear comfortable, properly fitting shoes. They should have good arch support and cushioning.
- Choose shoes with a low heel and a thick sole.
- Wear shoes with adequate room around the ball of your foot and toe. Square-toed shoes with a roomy toe box help prevent the pinching and scrunching of the foot that can lead to lots of painful problems.
- Wear sneakers as often as possible, especially when walking.
- Avoid narrow-toed shoes and high heels.

● Replace running shoes frequently.

It's also time for all of us to stop taking walking for granted and start thinking of it as an important physical activity, and one that we can learn to do better. Let your feet do the walking, not your shoes.

And don't worry - I'm not suggesting that you throw those gorgeous heels and pumps out. After all, a girl needs her shoes, doesn't she? Just save them for the really special occasions where you only have to sit pretty and no walking is involved!

■ **Danuk Dr Nor Ashikin Mokhtar** is a consultant obstetrician & gynaecologist (FRCOG, UK). For further information, visit www.primanora.com. The information provided is for educational and communication purposes only and it should not be construed as personal medical advice. Information published in this article is not intended to replace, supplant or augment consultation with a health professional regarding the reader's own medical care. The Star does not give any warranty on accuracy, completeness, functionality, usefulness or other assurances as to the content appearing in this column. The Star disclaims all responsibility for any losses, damage to property or personal injury suffered directly or indirectly from reliance on such information.

Quality Does Matter!

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- ✓ Provides minimum 18% EPA and 12% DHA
- ✓ Certified Halal

IN response to Dr Nor Ashikin Mokhtar's *Killer shoes* (*Fit4Life*, Nov 30), I would like to say kudos to her for coming up with an article about how our womenfolk have been taking their feet for granted in the name of fashion and beauty. At the same time, women are harming themselves just to fulfill the alleged standards of beauty brought on by societal and media pressures.

It's all a beauty trap

We've heard the word "beauty" all the time, regardless of which culture we are from. What is the definition of beauty?

I say beauty is actually beyond appearances and being fashionable. Being beautiful is all about being yourself, having self-esteem

and loving oneself, regardless of being not-so-perfect.

Unfortunately, in this day and age, our women and girls resort to starving, waxing, dyeing, plucking, tanning, whitening and even going under the knife just to look like an A-list celebrity or be able to wear

something in the name of fashion and beauty rather than for comfort and durability.

It is no surprise that women and girls have low self-esteem. They believe they do not fulfill the alleged standards of beauty.

Beauty does not have any criteria and anyone can be beautiful, regardless the shape of her figure, her skin tone, or her dress size. Unfortunately, the media and

fashion industry tell our womenfolk that they need the latest look, lose a few kilos or purchase the most expensive narrow high-heeled Manolo Blahniks in order to be beautiful.

Unless we tackle this issue, we are going to witness a future generation of women and girls who believe that one needs to look like celebrities in order to be beautiful. **S. Yin, Auckland, New Zealand**