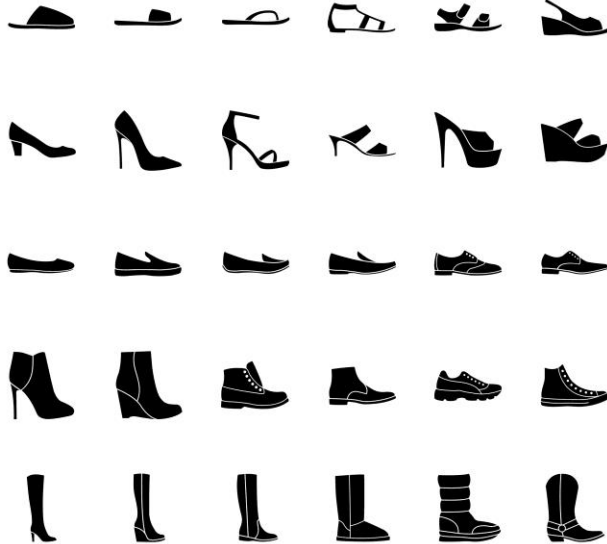


# Getting to Know Your Feet

## Information for Women



Women may experience unnecessary foot pain because of shoe selection. Women have more choices of the type of shoes to wear. High heels, shoes with pointed toes, open-toed shoes, and sandals can all affect foot health. The rule of thumb to remember is that you should not have foot pain. Shoe selection is most often the culprit for women and foot pain<sup>1</sup>. Other causes of foot pain in women can be pregnancy, normal aging and arthritis. Learning some reasons shoes cause foot pain is important.

*High heels*, especially those with heels higher than one inch put the foot in an unnatural position. High heels change how you walk and change pressure points in certain areas of the feet. A high heel three inches or more puts seven times more pressure on the ball of the foot. Wearing heels may also increase your risk of back pain, sprains, and shortened calf muscles. If you wear heels make sure they are not extremely high and do not wear them for long periods of time, especially walking long distances. Try wearing flats or athletic shoes for walking long distances and save the heels for in-door, short-term activities.

*Flip-flops* or open sandals can also cause foot pain and injury. Flip-flops do not give foot support and leave you prone to injuring your foot. Since most of the foot is exposed you may step on rocks or gravels, or even sharp objects, thus injuring your delicate feet or ankles.

*Stocking* choices can also be a culprit for foot, ankle, or calf pain. Too tight stockings can impede blood flow to the lower extremities. Stockings with seams can cause pressure areas and lead to blisters or skin tears. Other stockings—especially tight pantyhose—can be breeding grounds for bacteria and fungus.

During pregnancy women need to perform diligent foot care. Normal pregnancy causes changes in the body in preparation for childbirth. Hormone changes cause loosening of the support structures of the feet. Pregnancy can also increase swelling in feet and ankles. Wear soft, low, shoes that give support during walking and general activity. Perform routine foot care on a daily basis and make sure to inspect the feet for any abnormal changes.

Aging also brings changes to the feet. During normal aging you lose cushioning and bones become more fragile. It is important to choose good shoes that fit properly and do not put pressure points on the structures of the feet. Wear low heeled shoes to prevent falls and injury.

Common foot and ankle conditions that affect women include metatarsalgia (pain in the ball of the foot), bunions, hammertoes, neuromas, Achilles tendonitis, heel pain, pump-bump (enlargement in back of heel bone caused from excessive wear of pumps), and arch tendonitis.

Follow good foot care by daily inspection and washing of feet and notify your health care provider of any abnormal changes.

**Adapted** for use in Kentucky from American Podiatry Medical Association (2008). Women's Feet. Available online at [http://www.apma.org/s\\_apma/doc.asp?CID=371&DID=19798](http://www.apma.org/s_apma/doc.asp?CID=371&DID=19798).

This is a publication in an eight-part series on **Getting to Know Your Feet**. Other publications in this series are:

- Overview: HSW-PAR.820
- Common Foot Ailments: HSW-PAR.821
- Aging Feet: HSW-PAR.822
- Arthritis: HSW-PAR.823
- Diabetes: HSW-PAR.824
- Injuries: HSW-PAR.825
- Walking for Health: HSW-PAR.827

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