



For immediate release

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December 5, 2019

MPMA Has Some Advice to Avoid High Heel Pain for the Holidays

Lansing, Mich. – Holiday parties and New Year’s Eve celebrations are important occasions where we wear our finest fashions. However, the desire to look good sometimes comes with the aches caused by high heeled shoes.

“Many high heeled shoes for women also have pointed toe boxes,” said Dr. Jodie Sengstock, MPMA director of professional relations. “The narrow toe box squeezes the toes and the heel height causes a shift in the body column that must be compensated for by the foot. These issues generally cause aches and soreness of the feet and back, and can often result in sprains or other complications.”

The MPMA has a few suggestions to share for anyone wearing high heels for special occasions:

- Minimize the amount of time in the shoes. Wear boots or other comfortable shoes on your way to the event and return to those comfortable shoes as you depart.
- Place shoe pads in the inside of the shoes for added support and comfort for the ball of your foot.
- Consider bringing “purse slippers” – or compact slippers – that are designed to fit in a small purse. Slip those on as aches begin.
- A heel height of $\frac{3}{4}$ inch to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch is usually well tolerated.
- Consider shoes with an ankle strap or other ankle support to avoid sprains.

High Heel Stress

When standing barefoot, the falling line of body weight normally forms a perpendicular angle with floor. The body weight is distributed 50-50 between the heel and the forefoot. The moment any heel elevation is applied to the shoe, the normal 90 degree perpendicular angle of body weight is altered. The higher the heel the farther forward the center of gravity becomes.

The muscles, ligaments and various body joints, associated with accommodating this change in the center of gravity, must make compensatory changes with the elevated heel. If these compensatory changes were not made by the body then the elevated heel would cause our body to fall forward. The toll on the body can lead to leg, back and foot aches.

With heels, increased bowing of the arch on the bottom of the foot can lead to a contraction or shortening of the plantar fascia. The plantar fascia is the ligament that helps support the arch of the foot. Overtime the fascia can become vulnerable to strain or tearing when lower heels are worn or with aggressive walking or running.

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High heeled shoes are usually accompanied by pointed-toe shoe styles. The narrow toe boxes leave little room for the toes. Along with the very little toe space and the over activity of muscles on the bottom of the foot, in order to keep the body stable while in a higher heel, hammer toe deformities can develop quite frequently.

The frequent use of high heels can lead to shortening or contracture of the large Achilles tendon which is attached to the calf muscle in the back of the leg. In the case of women who become habitual wearers of higher heels, they usually develop the classic aching of the calf muscles and Achilles tendonitis, especially when there are shifts to lower heeled shoes. The bursa that is located in the back of the heel is also affected by the change and function of the Achilles tendon leading to a bursitis in the back of the heel bone.

An elevated heel creates added pressure on the ball of the foot and may lead to bursitis of the joints. Instead of 50% of the body weight in the heel and 50% in the ball of the foot, with an elevation in the heel 90% of the body weight is now concentrated in the ball of the foot and 10% in the heel.

High heeled shoes may look very fashionable, but prolonged and extensive wear can lead to many disabling deformities ranging from low back pain to foot pain.

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About the MPMA:

The Michigan Podiatric Medical Association (MPMA) has been dedicated to serving and protecting the public's podiatric health and maintaining the highest standards of ethical conduct among its members for over 100 years. The four main objectives of the organization are: to improve the quality of foot care; to promote the importance of foot health among the general public and health care professionals throughout the state; to increase awareness of the art and science of podiatric medicine and surgery; and to provide continuing medical education to podiatrists. www.mpma.org