

# Live Right Live Well

Health Food Fitness Expert QA



## Shoes Causing You Foot Pain?

By Kim Schworm Acosta

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Painful feet? Aching toes? You're not alone! A whopping 84 percent of women say they've experienced at least one foot problem, according to a recent survey from the American Podiatric Medical Association (APMA). Yet the majority also

report that they haven't had their feet measured in five years, and 20 percent say they wear painful shoes at least once a week. "In 90 percent of people who suffer from bunions, hammertoes, pinched nerves, ingrown toenails and corns, the shoe is the culprit," says Carol Frey, M.D., a spokeswoman for the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgery and clinical assistant professor of orthopedic surgery at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Even if you know better than to wear high heels day in and day out, you may be unwittingly contributing to your foot pain by committing one or more of the following footwear fouls:

### Footwear Foul No. 1

**Clinging to the shoe-size you wore when you were 18** Ligaments and muscles relax with age, causing feet to flatten and lengthen as you grow older. A few extra pounds can also contribute to wider feet. So have your feet measured the next time you buy shoes and every couple years after that -- especially if you've gained 20+ pounds in the meantime. And mothers shouldn't automatically buy their pre-kid shoe size. Says Frey: "Women's feet expand during pregnancy, and they return to their pre-pregnancy size only about half the time."

### Footwear Foul No. 2

**Assuming shoes will break in after you wear them** If shoes don't feel comfortable immediately, it means they were either not properly designed or not properly fitted to your feet, experts say. For optimum comfort, choose shoes with a rounded or square toe box made of breathable materials, such as canvas or leather -- *not* plastic. Aim for a shock-absorbent heel no more than two inches high -- a 3-inch heel creates seven times more stress on the forefoot than a 1-inch heel, according to the APMA.

### Footwear Foul No. 3

**Not knowing how to get a proper fit** Shop for shoes later in the day, when feet tend to be their biggest, advises Marlene Reid, D.P.M., a podiatrist in Westmont, Ill. Since a person's feet are rarely the same exact size, go for

search

### Reader Tips

I think of my dinner plate like a pie chart and try to make half of it veggies, one-fourth protein such as chicken or fish, and one-fourth carbohydrates such as rice or pasta.

Ron Miller  
Middletown, CT

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### "I Did It!"



Have you recently improved the quality of your life -- or the life of a

shoes that fit your largest foot, adds Frey. When standing, be certain there's at least one-half inch between the end of the shoe and your longest toe (which may or may not be your big toe). Then walk on a hard surface, assessing cushioning, comfort and whether your heel fits snugly (which is a good sign) or slides up and down.

#### Footwear Foul No. 4

**Making unnecessary sacrifices for fashion** "New technology has made it easier for comfortable features -- like memory foam insoles and supportive shoe linings -- to be built into good-looking shoes," says Reid. So it's easier now than ever before to look good *and* feel good. While high heels are okay for short periods, low, wider heels -- such as kitten heels with a soft, stable sole -- are a more foot-friendly fashion choice, according to the APMA. They offer support and balance while reducing pressure on the ball of the foot and toes. Platform shoes are another popular style that gets the thumbs-up from foot experts. "They give you the height of a high heel without the pressure on the forefoot," says Frey. But make sure you have good balance, otherwise you'll risk a sprain, she adds. Clogs are another great option as they tend to roll with your foot, decreasing the shock to your system as you pound the pavement.

#### Footwear Foul No. 5

**Walking too far in a new style** Even properly fitting shoes can be a problem if you're not used to them. So if you've never tried flip-flops or ballet flats before, take it easy at first. These shoes don't deserve a bad rap, notes Frey, but they do require your arches and the small muscles in your toes to work a bit harder, which can take some getting used to.

Experts estimate that the average person walks 150,000 miles in a lifetime. Avoid these five fouls, and you'll enjoy the journey!

**Kim Schworm Acosta** is the former health editor of *Shape* magazine and the health director of VIV. She has also written for Family Circle, Brides, Living Fit and Looking Good Now.

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shoes

would have liked some examples of great comfortable shoes.

Posted by karen on 10/1/08 at 8:53 AM

Shoes

Yes my feet ache a lot I have bunions I do get a pedicure every month and

family member -- in a healthy way?

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#### Recipe



#### Pear and Cheese Quesadillas

The best snacks are those with a variety of nutrient-rich food groups represented. This quesadilla fits the bill because it contains fruit, dairy and whole grains.

[Full Recipe>>](#)

#### Quiz

If you get a muscle cramp while working out, it may be due to ...

- Dehydration
- Exercising too much
- Diabetes
- Any of the above

[Answer>>](#)

#### Poll

How often does heartburn keep you up at night?

- More than once a week
- Once a week
- Once or twice a month
- Never

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I do my own at home the other weeks. Glad that there is some who knows and can explain this so others can understand. When I was in my 16 teens I wore 6 inches heels with great ease and with no problems, I have a very high arch or instep can not remember which one, now I am 65 I have been wearing 2"heels can not wear any flat shoes, I am in so much pain if I wear anything higher, but I just conslue myself that I had done that years ago and enjoyed it so there is no reason not to just go for comfort now.

Posted by kathleen Woods on 10/1/08 at 12:21 PM

#### MEN'S SHOES

WHY DON'T YOU MENTION THE TROUBLE THAT MEN HAVE? THEY ALSO HAVE FEET, AND THEY ARE VERY OFTEN SWOLLEN.

Posted by HERBERT POTOKER on 10/1/08 at 2:37 PM

#### comfortable shoes

I need comfortable working shoes. The shoes must have an arch support.

Posted by Denise L. Metcalf on 10/2/08 at 3:05 AM

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