

If You're Going to Wear High Heels, Be Healthy About It



Holiday season means more parties, which means pulling out those favorite holiday heels. Whether you're a novice or a seasoned stiletto-strutter, you're still vulnerable to the aches and pains of heel-wear.

Below are some of the best-kept secrets for staying pain-free and stiletto-ready this Holiday Season!

1. Stretch your feet and hips.

One of the most important things a woman can do before sliding into her high heels is to keep her feet and hips flexible. When a woman stands in her favorite stilettos, her body weight is shifted forward

on to the ball of the foot. Not only is this painful, but it also causes the hips to shift forward and the back to arch. The more flexible the hips are, the better a woman will be able to counter this position and protect her lower back.

2. Find the perfect fit!

One of the downsides of holiday heels is that most are going to be closed-toed. This means that the pressure and pain may return to the toes and sides of the feet. Ensuring a perfect fit and heel made of materials that stretch will alleviate some of this excess pressure. Want some added cushioning on the toes? A great trick is to use a gel slip over the toes.

3. Watch the heel height.

The holiday season means plenty of parties requiring prolonged standing and/or dancing in your favorite heels. I recommend that women do not exceed a heel height of 3 inches. Anything over this and you're doubling the stress placed on the feet, knees and lower back. Many high heels sneak in a platform on the front of the shoe, which is a sneaky way to increase height without changing the angle of the foot. If you insist on wearing 4-inch heels (or higher), sneak in a pair of emergency flats for the end of the night!

4. Use stiletto posture.

Did you know that your posture can actually control the amount of pressure in your feet? When standing in high heels, try to keep the shoulders back, lower abdominals contracted and pelvis slightly tucked under. Keeping the pelvis tucked and the lower abdominals contracted actually lifts the body to resist gravity. This means less pressure on your feet! So just like a tango dancer can glide across the dance floor, you, too want to carry yourself with grace. Your feet will thank you!

5. Practice stiletto recovery.

What a woman does *after* wearing her high heels is almost as important as what she does *before* she wears them! High heels tighten the muscles of the feet and calves, which means after a long night in heels, foot stretches are key.

One of the best stretches for the calves is sitting with both legs extended, placing a towel or belt around the feet and gently pulling back until a stretch is felt in the back of the legs. Hold for 30 seconds to a minute and repeat four times. To recover the muscles of the foot, you should stand on golf balls. Begin by sitting with one golf ball under each foot - as you adjust to the pressure, begin to stand up. Try to do at least 5 minutes every time you wear your heels. Good luck!