

Happy feet

Fashionable shoes can often cause foot pain and injuries. What can be done to reduce the risk of injury when you're flaunting fashionable footwear? Words: Anna Gardiner

Despite playing a primary part in our daily lives, feet are often overlooked when it comes to taking care of our bodies. Feet often need strengthening and attention to withstand the continual stress and load from walking, running and the weight they're placed under — just as our glutes, core, arms and legs do. Over time, feet can become fatigued and need some help to avoid injury and damage.

There are a number of niggles associated with the feet that many people will suffer with at some point in their lives, especially the older we get. Diagnosis by a podiatrist or doctor is, of course, always advised.

Plantar fasciitis is probably the most well-known complaint, characterised by pain on the bottom of your foot, around your heel and arch. If left, it can affect everyday life and takes time to recover. There is also Achilles tendonitis, an injury of the tendon that connects the calf muscles at the back of the lower leg to the heel bone. Runners and weekend sport enthusiasts are likely to experience this, as well as those wearing high heels frequently. Ball of the foot pain is often associated with metatarsalgia, another injury

associated with running or a long time spent on your feet, particularly when wearing ill-fitting footwear.

Our footwear can play a role in protection from wear and tear of your feet — fashionable, but non-supportive shoe choices such as ballet pumps, flip-flops, flat sandals and high heels often contribute to injury. Is it possible to wear these types of shoes but not damage our feet?

Put your feet first

Matt Hart, MSK Podiatrist at ACE Feet in Motion, Cardiff, says: "Wearing footwear with no support doesn't theoretically lead to injury. However, issues occur because women's footwear often doesn't correctly fit the foot."

Shoe sizes are as generic as clothing. Just as our body shape rarely conforms to factory-standard sizes, our feet struggle to adapt to average shoe sizes when they're unique in length, width and depth.

Injuries can occur when feet fatigue under repetitive stresses and loads such as increasing body mass and changes in the time spent on our feet or terrain, particularly when combined with shoes that either aren't comfortable or that increase stress in certain areas of the foot.



▲ PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY

Step-by-step strengthening

Although some conditioning can be done without seeing a podiatrist — calf raises for the achilles, resistance band work for the plantar and ankle, toe work for the bottom of the foot — it's best to have a bespoke plan.

Conditioning needn't be onerous — much of it can be done seated at a desk or on the sofa and incorporated

into your normal day, but it's as important as strengthening any other part of the body.

Best foot forward

When it comes to protecting feet, Matt suggests the time spent in the shoes is the real issue. He says: "Shoes should be specific to the activities you're doing. Ensure that the fit — including

length, width, depth of toe box and fit around the heel — is right for your foot. If more comfort is required, then the use of cushioned insoles, such as gel inserts, may be an option."

If you're starting to suffer with any foot pain, it's best to get it looked at sooner rather than later — because we're always using our feet, they're a difficult area to let rest and heal.

With you through difficulties

Mental health problems affect millions of people all over the world



At any point, about 11% of adults have suffered a form of mental illness in the past year. These conditions are a major cause of suffering (for patients and their families), disability and loss of work/productivity. The impact of mental illnesses on the quality of life of patients is comparable to conditions such as heart diseases and diabetes. Fortunately, the majority of patients experience mental illnesses in mild to moderate forms, as well as only experiencing a few episodes (sometimes only one) in their lifetime.

Although mental health problems are very common, only a fraction of patients seek professional help, and an even smaller group receive treatment. It's known that the delay in seeking help tends to impair the response to treatment and the rate of recovery. Therefore, it's vital patients seek help rather than stay suffering in silence.

Dr Basit is an experienced consultant psychiatrist with years of practice in different NHS services. He's an expert in the assessment and treatment of mental illnesses affecting all ages, including anxiety and panic disorder, depression, bipolar affective disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, schizophrenia and psychosis, and has experience in the field of adult ADHD. Dr Basit's background in general practice and his interest in internal medicine helps in his other area of expertise, which is offering psychiatric care to older

adults, particularly surrounding conditions such as cognitive impairment and dementia.

Dr Basit combines different elements in order to offer the best care he can to his patients:

- He keeps his knowledge of psychiatric illnesses and their treatments completely up to date and based on the best available evidence.
- He communicates well with his patients, benefiting from years of honorary teachings and tutorials in respectable universities (Imperial College London, King's College London).
- He understands things like psychological factors, interpersonal difficulties and family dynamics that can affect patients by using his training and experience of cognitive analytic therapy.
- He understands sensitive cultural factors that may affect patients, due to his interest in different cultures and background of working with Doctors without Borders.

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