

WomensCare

A MAGAZINE FOR YOUR MIND, BODY, AND SPIRIT

WINTER 2006

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Healthy Henderson event

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How you can get it back

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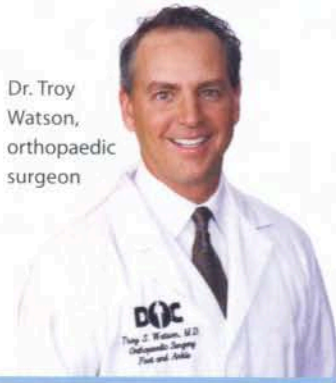
Help pets — they will help you



St. Rose Dominican Hospitals

CHW

THE HIGH COST OF HIGH HEELS



Dr. Troy Watson, orthopaedic surgeon

They are haute couture — leopard print pumps, flower-adorned sling backs and black strappy stilettos that face up your leg. However, today's hot fashions may come with a high price. "When a woman wears high heels, the heel of her foot is significantly higher than the front of the shoe creating a longer, leaner look to her leg," says Dr. Troy Watson, orthopaedic surgeon.

"But it also shifts her weight from the back to the front of the foot, so that she walks or stands on her forefoot and toes, which over time can give her bunions and hammer toes."

WomensCare asked Dr. Watson about hurtful, unfashionable bunions and for information on how to alleviate the pain they cause.

WomensCare: What is a bunion?

Dr. Watson: It's a bony bump that forms on the outside and top of the great toe, where it connects to the foot. When a bunion forms many people will also develop a hammer toe, which is an abnormal bent second toe. These deformities may not only cause pain, but also an abnormal gait. A bunion compromises the stability and normal function of the foot, toes and ligaments that help us walk properly.

WC: Are high heels really to blame?

DW: Women are ten times more likely to develop bunions than

men. It is estimated that half of American women have bunions. Yet, in studies of women in cultures who don't wear high-heeled shoes, there is less than a 3 percent incidence of bunions.

WC: Are bunions hereditary?

DW: There is growing evidence that suggests that if your mother or grandmother had bunions, you may be more prone to them too. So, while a young woman of 25 or 35 may think she can safely wear high heels, she is wise to check out her relative's feet. Bunions tend to become a more significant problem as women reach their 40s or 50s.

WC: How can women reduce the pain of bunions and hammer toes?

DW: As a general rule, a soft shoe with a wide toe box that provides plenty of room for the front of the foot will provide protection for the affected area. And a soft arch support or a sling may take pressure off the second toe.

WC: Is surgery a good option for bunions?

DW: Surgery may be necessary if the patient has a severe deformity that causes constant pain, a dislocation of the second metatarsophalangeal joint (at the base of the great toe), or hammer toes. Bunion surgery should be chosen only when conservative treatment has failed. It should never be performed for cosmetic reasons.

WC: What surgery would you recommend? What can women expect?

DW: The surgical treatment of bunions varies based on the severity of the condition. Surgery is usually performed with a local anesthetic block, and typically doesn't require an overnight hospital stay. Medications can help control pain in the day or two after surgery. Plus, a special postoperative shoe is worn for 6 to 8 weeks. **WC**

THE WELL-HEELED WOMAN

Healthy joints, legs and back muscles help a woman to maintain normal balance and posture. Wearing high-heel shoes changes the physical attributes of standing and walking. It increases the inward angle of the knee, places stress on the inside of the knee and hip joints, causes calf muscles to tighten, and forces the pelvis forward increasing the curve of the low back. These changes increase the chances of injury and pain.

To reduce your chance of injury:

- Minimize the time spent wearing high heels. For example, wear sneakers walking to and from the office and such.
- Wear short heels. Don't wear a heel of more than two inches. Low heels of one-

half to three-quarters of an inch are good for both the front and back of the foot.

- Wear a heel with a wide base for balance. A shoe with a wide heel base increases stability and helps distribute the pressure over a wider area of the foot.
- Wear a shoe with a square-toed roomy toe box to help prevent the pinching and scrunching of the foot.
- Stretch calf and leg muscles after wearing high heels to help them relax and remain loose.

