

# How bad are high heels? We find out!



By: Dr. Karen Latimer

I've been entertaining a lot lately, and with the holidays on the immediate horizon, seems the festivities in my house are only going to go up a notch. I love to have people over for dinner and cocktails, love when everyone is in my kitchen keeping me company while I prepare the meal and love spending time with friends until the wee hours. But, here is the problem. My feet are killing me. When you are the hostess, you never sit down. Easy solution: wear flats. Except, I feel prettier -- and skinnier -- in heels. The pain I endure the next day should be enough to make me spend money on some more sensible shoes, but I am a slow learner. After all, the morning-after headaches and dry mouth have done nothing to make me put down my Chardonnay. How bad is a little foot hangover? I asked an expert. Dr. Robert Conenello is a Podiatrist from Orangeburg, NY.

***Dr. Karen Latimer: What are the long-term effects of wearing heels?***

**Dr. Robert Conenello:** The increased heel height shortens the Achilles tendon, which in the long run decreases the range of motion of the foot and ankle. The forefoot is also pushed forward into a very tight Toebox. This transfers pressures to the ball of the foot and deforms the foot leading to bunions and hammer toes.

***Dr. Karen Latimer:* Other than wearing flats, is there anything women can do to minimize the negative effects?**

**Dr. Robert Conenello:** Daily stretching of the calves and massage can decrease the negative effects of the heel height. Utilizing some sort of arch support will offload the pressures to the forefoot.

***Dr. Karen Latimer:* Are some heels worse than others?**

**Dr. Robert Conenello:** Ones that are over two inches and have very tight toeboxes. The most fashionable shoes show "toe cleavage"...showing the space between the first and second toe. These have the least support.

***Dr. Karen Latimer:* What about platform heels?**

**Dr. Robert Conenello:** I would say that although the platform shoe does decrease the overall "drop" from rearfoot to forefoot, it still does not allow for normal motion.

***Dr. Karen Latimer:* So, there is a heel height threshold we should try to stay below?**

**Dr. Robert Conenello:** Yes. Try to keep your heels under two inches.

***Dr. Karen Latimer:* Are some people more prone to the adverse side effects of fabulous shoes?**

**Dr. Robert Conenello:** Yes. Overweight and elderly individual are more at risk for these side effects.

***Dr. Karen Latimer:* You probably are of the opinion women should only wear flats, but that's because you can't possibly understand how much many women love their heels!**

**Dr. Robert Conenello:** The reality is yes, I am a man, and I think that puts me in an interesting perspective. I definitely appreciate the way the female forms looks while in heels. The bottom line is that a woman has to be sensible. If she is going to a cocktail reception, then go for the heels. If she is going to be spending time walking or standing in one place, then maybe she needs to consider an alternative style.

***Dr. Karen Latimer:* Thanks to Dr. Conenello for not yelling at me, and saying I ought to know better. I am going to take his advice to heart. For the day to day, low heels it is. But, sometimes, the woman in me is stronger than the doc in me. So, until I can find a flat shoe that makes me feel sexier and thinner, I'll be taking the risk in heels at parties. I am sure I can find some time for a little stretching and massage ... especially for massage.**

**Dr. Robert Conenello:** The bottom line is this. Listen to your feet. If they are throbbing before you walk out of your bedroom, reconsider. Even if you aren't worried about the long-term effects just yet, nothing can ruin a fun night like numb, cramped toes or an ankle sprain.

*Dr. Robert Conenello is the Immediate Past President of the American Academy of Podiatric Sports Medicine, Global Clinical Advisor of Special Olympics International, Fellow of the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons. He has been in Private Practice over 20 years @ Orangetown Podiatry.*