

Think Long and Hard About Your Summer Footwear

Summer Footwear Can Impact Your Long-Term Joint, Muscle Health, Say Chiropractors

Summer is here and our feet are finally free, unburdened from boots and other enclosed shoes that make them hot, tired and uncomfortable. But wait a minute. Those slip-on shoes, flip-flops and sandals you're wearing, might be affecting much more than your feet.

According to Leo Bronston, DC, a practicing doctor of chiropractic for 30 years in western Wisconsin and a member of the American Chiropractic Association, those summer shoes are also changing the way you walk, leaving you open to infection and leading to possible sprains or heel, toe or foot pain.

“Patients come in with a wide variety of summer footwear that looks good, but most don't consider how supportive the shoes are or how they affect the body's mechanics,” says Dr. Bronston. “Down the line, these patients are likely to experience knee, ankle and lower-back pain as a result of their footwear choices.”

One popular summer shoe that can present a multitude of problems is the flip-flop. While doctors of chiropractic don't normally recommend wearing flip flops for use beyond the beach, pool or health club, they realize that flip-flops are a popular choice.

According to the NPD Group's 2007 Flip-Flop Market Snapshot, two-thirds of consumers own flip-flops, and while four in five women wear at least one pair, most women own, on average, 4.5 pairs.

“Everyone needs to pay attention to the health of their feet. There are many choices out there, so I advise patients to purchase flip-flops that actually provide support and to not wear them for long distances or during the entire day,” cautions Dr. Bronston.

Understanding the popularity of flip-flops and other summer shoes, Dr. Bronston does recommend a selection of Okabashi sandals endorsed by the American Chiropractic Association, the largest professional association in the world representing doctors of chiropractic.

“Okabashi’s footwear is designed with some very important features to ensure safety, shock absorption, arch support and overall better foot health,” Dr. Bronston explains. “If you want to wear summer sandals, there are better choices out there.”

Bronston points out that since most flip-flops offer poor shock absorption, one can even get stress fractures as a result of the repetitive forces on the feet.

When selecting flip-flops, Dr. Bronston advises patients to look for the following features to minimize pain and injury:

- Make sure they are slip-resistant.
- Make sure the material has some type of anti-microbial treatment.
- Make sure flip flops are flexible, yet have a firm enough foot bed for support.
- Look for a stimulating footbed with massage beads or other features because the foot has receptors at the bottom that help balance us.
- Make sure the flip-flop fits properly, not too big or too small – most people grip flip flops with their toes to keep them from falling off, causing stress on the entire foot.

Most of all, use common sense when deciding when it’s appropriate to wear flip-flops. Mowing the lawn, doing yard work or playing sports might seem like a good idea, until you end up with a sprain or fracture because of an unsupported foot or ankle.

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1. Jpeg Photo of Okabashi flip flop available by emailing Caroline March-Long at cldlong@earthlink.net



Caption: Okabashi (www.okabashi.com) flip-flops ensure safety, shock absorption, arch support and overall better foot health.