



The Higher Price

They may be fashion's necessary evil, but are those four inches of fabulousness worth all the risks?

By Nina Hemphill Reeder

For former stylist turned full-time fashion blogger Marie Denee, heels hold a special place in her wardrobe.

"When a woman puts on heels, there is an extra boost of confidence. Her shoulders drop back, her posture changes. It allows an extra oomph—another level of fashion that comes with wearing heels," says the 30-year-old founder of The Curvy Fashionista, who is based just outside of Los Angeles. "Even as a plus-size woman, once I put on heels, the muscles that I do have are showing. My legs feel like they are that much longer."

"I'm not saying they don't make a leg look good, a leg looks good in high heels," says Dr. Sheryl Strich, president of the American Association for Women Podiatrists, but adds, "when you are over two and a half inches, you are set-

ting yourself up for trouble."

Trouble, Strich explains, comes in the form of stress fractures, arch fatigue, knee and back pain, a propensity for bunions, neuroma (pinched nerve), nail fungus, in-grown toenails and even arthritic conditions. These problems occur as a result of the weight distribution caused by heels, where the forefoot now absorbs an unnatural amount of pressure, gravity pushes the toes and nail bed into the front of the shoe and your normal walk and body alignment are altered.

"You are not walking correctly in a high heel because your foot is in the wrong position," she says. "Your bones are your bones [and they won't shift], but it is the soft tissue that is going to move around. If your joints are in malalignment, you can set yourself up for arthritic prob-

lems down the line."

According to Christopher Powers, Ph.D., associate professor in the Division of Biokinesiology & Physical Therapy at University of Southern California, most of these conditions will relieve themselves after temporarily ceasing high heel use. However, Powers, who has published three studies on high heel effects, including an earlier study on fall potential, says the greatest danger of heel use comes from high heel-related injuries.

"When you are walking in high heels, your gait pattern changes to a walk that exposes you to increased potential of slipping," he explains of the walk, which causes your pelvis to tilt forward, knees to bend and stride to shorten. "The higher the heel, the more at risk you are. Even a moderate (1.2-inch) heel height exposes you to a higher risk."

And according to a recent small-participant study published in the *Journal of Applied Physiology*, long-term usage can permanently alter your natural walk, increasing your risk of falls and strain injury even when you are not wearing heels.

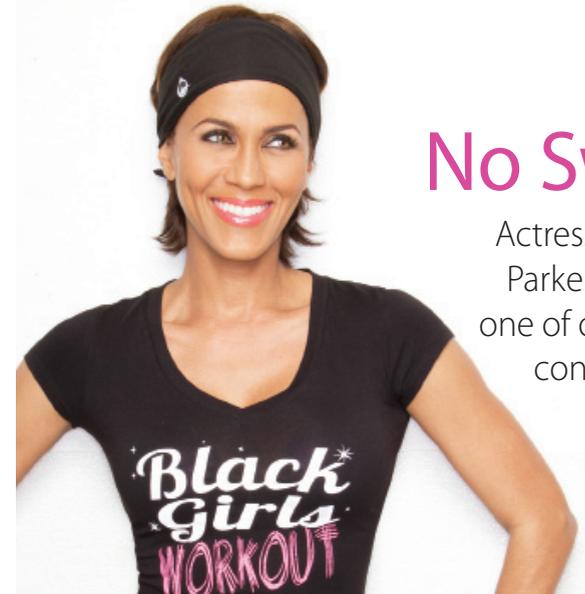
Denee is no stranger to the accompanying pains of high heels and slip potential—in fact, she can recall an incident that resulted in a near injury. Yet she claims to know the risks and has called upon her fashion know-how to navigate around the dangers.

"I always try to switch it up and keep a variety, so heels are not an everyday occurrence," she says. And when she does wear heels, she frequently wears foot orthotics—something that Strich highly recommends—and wears more wedges, thicker heels and platform heels, which also gain Strich's seal of approval since they provide more support and distribute weight better than stilettos.

But in the end, Denee and experts Strich and Powers concede that the rules of fashion may, for once, finally agree with the laws of medical science. "Everything in moderation is okay."

No Sweat

Actress Nicole Ari Parker works out one of our biggest conundrums—exercise-ruined hair.



The threat of messing up your hair is a huge deterrent to exercise for African-African women. But now women may have a new recourse thanks to actress Nicole Ari Parker and her Save Your Do gymwraps.

"The gymwraps came out of necessity, really. Nothing really worked," she says about the athletic headbands and scarves she used to try before. "The hair just became part of an excuse not to go to the gym with my husband on time."

Parker personally sought out the latest textile technology to bring together a product that wicks away sweat and moisture, allows cool air in to the scalp and hot air to escape and stays securely in place once tied. The effect, she says, is hair that becomes less sweat soaked and frizzy after a workout. The gymwraps come in three different colors and three styles: narrow band, wide, band and full triangle (starting at \$24.95 | saveyourdo.com —Nina Hemphill Reeder

A HARD DAY'S WORK AVOID THE FIVE MOST UNHEALTHY OFFICE HABITS.

As many of us spend the majority of our waking time at work, the habits we adopt there have a huge impact on our overall health. This month, I want to address five common unhealthy habits in the workplace.

1. SITTING TOO LONG

A recent study in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* found that those who spend 11 or more hours a day sitting are 40 percent more likely to die over the next three years regardless of how physically active they are otherwise. But even if you aren't working 11-hour days, challenge yourself to get up and move around at least once an hour. Take the stairs instead of the elevator, take calls standing, whatever works for you.

2. NOT DRINKING ENOUGH WATER

It's easy to get busy at your desk and neglect a basic need like hydration. Keep a water bottle handy, keep it filled and sip all day long.

3. MAKING BAD CAFETERIA CHOICES

Don't be captive to unhealthy cafeteria menus. If your workplace doesn't offer healthy choices, work with your management to improve the offerings. There's a relationship between unhealthy diets and

increased sick time and healthcare costs, so it's in everyone's best interest to do better.

4. EATING OUT

Time is of the essence during your lunch break, but beware of fast food restaurants. If you do frequent them, take the time to familiarize yourself with their menus and the healthiest options. The better bet is to pack a healthy lunch. You'll eat better and likely save yourself money.

5. MUNCHING MINDLESSLY

Frequent visits to the vending machine can be disastrous. Plan ahead and bring healthy snacks like nuts and fruit. They're better for your energy and your diet.

Those of you who've read my column in the past or my book, *The Doctor in the Mirror*, know that I believe each of us is the best doctor for ourselves, so take charge of your health. If you have a tip or topic you'd like to see me discuss, share it with me at thedoctorinthemirror.com.



Dr. Reed Tuckson is the executive vice president and chief of medical affairs at UnitedHealth Group.

Eye Tunes

Follow these tips to avoid computer vision syndrome.

Today's modern professionals spend hours on computers, tablets and smart phones, but this can give way to a condition called computer vision syndrome (CVS), in which eyes are strained or fatigued as a result of prolonged computer use.

Though only temporary, the syndrome can bring on headaches, red or dry eyes and blurred vision. To reduce your chances of CVS, the American Optometric Association suggests resting your eyes for 15 minutes every two hours, reducing computer or screen glare, positioning the center of your screen four to five inches below eye level and wearing proper visual aids if needed. —N.H.R.

PLATING UP

Should you consider eating your placenta?

The idea may sound unappetizing, but according to a recent study by University at Buffalo and Buffalo State College, ingesting the placenta, called placentophagia, may provide benefits to both the human mother and even nonmothers, including males.

The study, which examined the practice across species, suggests that placentophagia may be the link to cracking postpartum depression, since humans are practically the only placental mammals who don't ingest any part of their afterbirth and the only mammals who generally experience problems like postpartum depression and a failure to bond with their young. Additionally, the afterbirth contains hormones and opioids (pain-relieving chemicals), which researchers suggest may do everything from increasing lactation and regulating mood to curbing fatigue. —N.H.R.

If country-fried placenta and onions still makes your skin crawl, a recent trend has new mothers encapsulating their afterbirth in pills as a more attractive form of placentophagia.

EYE TUNES: YURI ARCURI; HIGHER PRICE: INK STUDIOS; LEGS: CARLOS PHOTOS

NICOLE ARI PARKER: ROBERT ECTOR; REED TUCKSON: COURTESY OF SUBJECT