

Weekend Doctor

By DR. THOMAS F. VAIL.

Kim Kardashian was recently photographed wearing high-heeled sandals. This doesn't seem out of the ordinary except that Kim was very pregnant with very swollen feet.

There was much online talk about Kim's puffy feet and the majority of the comments were not nice. Kim leads a public life that most of us can't and don't want to relate to. However, swollen feet and ankles is a common issue for many people.

Excess fluid in the limbs can be very uncomfortable and make wearing properly fitting shoes difficult. Pregnancy is only one cause of swollen limbs.

With summer fast approaching, most of us are trading in the long pants for shorts and wearing more revealing shoe gear. Before the weather gets too warm, now is a good time to find out the cause of your swollen feet.

Heart, liver, or kidney disease: Heart disease is the leading cause of death.

Right-sided heart failure is when the right side of your heart isn't pumping blood properly to the lungs and the left side of the heart. Blood builds up in the lower limbs leading to swollen feet and ankles.

Fluid also builds up in the legs if the kidneys are diseased and cannot filter fluid properly. The liver makes a protein called albumin that keeps blood from leaking out of vessels. If the liver is damaged, albumin decreases and fluid begins to accumulate in the ankles and feet.

Venous Insufficiency: The veins in our legs are one-way valves that bring blood back to the heart.

When veins are damaged or weakened, the blood cannot move back toward the heart and stands still. This retained fluid leads to swollen legs, ankles and feet.

If nothing is done to push the fluid upward, skin ulcers and infection can occur.

Blood clot: Blood clots in the legs are very serious.

A blood clot in the deep veins of the legs is called a deep-vein thrombosis. This type of blood clot can stop blood flow back to the heart and cause swelling in legs, ankle, and feet. Death can occur if this blood clot breaks off and travels to the heart and lungs.

Signs of a deep vein thrombosis are painful swelling in one leg, a low fever, and possibly a change in color of the affected leg. Treatment for deep vein thrombosis involves the use of blood thinners to break up the clot.

Medications: Finally, many drugs that people take daily can cause swelling in the feet and ankle.

The drugs include oral contraceptives, hormone-replacement therapy, calcium-channel blockers, steroids, anti-depressants, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications and diabetic medication.

There are several more causes for swollen feet and ankles including, injury, infection, thyroid disease, too much salt intake, too much alcohol use, and aging.

It is very important to get a correct diagnosis for proper treatment. Some forms of treatment are elevating the legs, dietary changes, stopping medication, protein replacement and wearing compression stockings to bring fluid back towards the heart.

Once you know the cause, your podiatrist will help you determine which treatment is best for you. Kim's swollen feet in high heels may have looked humorous, but it is not a laughing matter. Swollen feet can be a sign of a more serious problem.

Check your feet daily and be sure to schedule an appointment with your podiatrist.



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