

## Weekend Doctor

By DR. THOMAS F. VAIL

If June is for brides, then July is certainly for podiatrists, who see brides with foot problems ranging from heel pain to ingrown toenails to the dreaded fungal nail.

A pointy, high heeled shoe can cause damage to your feet in just one day.

Sparkles, spangles and color, new or vintage, whatever a new bride's preference in wedding shoe styles, there's one trend that every bride should get behind: comfort.

Pretty flats and even tennis shoes have been gaining popularity among brides for several years and, while those styles may not be to everyone's taste, the concept of comfortable wedding shoes is good for everyone.

A recent American Podiatric Medical Association survey indicated that most women do emphasize comfort over looks when choosing dress shoes, but many brides consider comfort less important than style on their big day.

Brides may think that, since they're only wearing their wedding shoes for a day, it doesn't matter if the shoes make their feet hurt.

But shoes that hurt your feet can cause long-term problems, and make existing ones even worse. Not to mention that sore feet can put a damper on your wedding, reception and even the honeymoon.

The trauma of your toes being cramped in a pointy-toed shoe can cause injury to your nail plate and root in just a few hours. This nail can then eventually be susceptible to fungus.

And, once you have fungus, it is very difficult to eliminate.

Treatment regimens for toenail fungus can last from six months to a year and sometimes can include combinations of topical, oral and laser treatments. Because of the difficulty to break-the-cycle of infection with fungus infections it requires dedication to daily treatments and sanitizing of shoes.

Brides can prevent fungal nail infections by taking these simple precautions, especially on their honeymoon:

- Keep your feet clean and dry.
- Wear shower shoes in public facilities whenever possible.
- Clip nails straight across so that the nail does not extend beyond the tip of the toe.
- Use a quality foot powder (talcum, not cornstarch) in conjunction with shoes that fit well and are made of materials that breathe.
- Avoid wearing excessively tight hosiery, which promotes moisture. Socks made of synthetic fiber tend to "wick" away moisture faster than cotton or wool socks, especially for those with more active lifestyles. Try Nanno bamboo fiber socks.
- Disinfect home pedicure tools and don't apply polish to nails suspected of infection.

I often see brides with heel pain or plantar fasciitis. The strain that high heels put on the ball of the foot contributes to inflammation in the plantar fascia tendon along the arch of the foot.

Often, heel spurs are seen in conjunction with this and sometimes a Haglund's deformity, which is a bump on the back of the heel.

Treatments today for plantar fasciitis no longer involve surgery, in most cases. Exercises, custom orthotics and stretching of the tendon often help and are the first course for treatment.

In the rare instance that these fail, I always recommend shockwave therapy and/or autologous blood platelet injections before jumping into surgery.

Most women don't want the complications of surgery which can be numerous including months of recovery with non-weight bearing, infection and swelling at the surgical site. I always consider surgery for plantar fasciitis and heel spurs a last resort.

When a bride calls my office after coming back from her honeymoon, I know it was from wearing the wrong type or size shoes.

I often get a call that the big toe is red, painful and swollen. This is the tell-tale sign of an ingrown toenail. Although most ingrown toenails are due to the curvation of your toenail, wearing the wrong size shoe can cramp your toes and cause the nail border to start to grow inward into the skin. This can be very painful.

Ingrown toenails start out hard, swollen and tender. Left untreated, they may become sore, red, and infected and the skin may start to grow over the ingrown toenail.

In most cases, treating ingrown toenails is simple: Soak the foot in warm, soapy water several times each day. Avoid wearing tight shoes or socks. Antibiotics are sometimes prescribed if an infection is present.

Note: Please consult your physician before taking any medications. In severe cases, if an acute infection occurs, surgical removal of part of the ingrown toenail may be needed.

Known as partial nail plate avulsion, the procedure involves injecting the toe with an anesthetic and cutting out the ingrown part of the toenail.



Vail

*Vail is with Advanced Footcare Clinic, Findlay. Questions for Blanchard Valley Health System experts may be sent to Weekend Doctor, The Courier, P.O. Box 609, Findlay, OH 45839.*