

RUNNER'S WORLD

MEDICAL & TRAINING

ADVICE

EDITED BY BETH ECK

High-Heeled Hell

Q: In a recent "Women's Running" column [November 1998], the author laments that wearing high heels can lead to chronic foot injuries. Is this true?
S.B., CARMEL, CALIF.

A: Yes, wearing high-heeled shoes can lead to foot injury. For one, high heels essentially push up the calf and buttock muscles and cause leg muscles to contract. Over time, this can result in chronically tight calves and Achilles tendonitis. **When you wear heels, impact forces are transferred from the sturdy heel and arch to the ball of your foot. The higher the heel, the more body weight the ball is supporting.** This can cause all sorts of problems, from metatarsal bruising and hammertoe deformities to corns, bunions and calluses.

What should you do if you *must* wear high heels? First, stretch on a regular basis, paying special attention your calves. Also, choose dress shoes with a wider, less pointy toebox. Look for shoes with a soft, cushiony forefoot that will protect the balls of your feet. And to prevent your feet from overly adapting to high-heeled shoes, alternate your shoe heights daily. Other options include wearing metatarsal pads or orthotics in your shoes to shift back impact forces into the arches of your feet.

—Richard T. Braver, D.P.M., runner and podiatrist practicing in Englewood and Fair Lawn, N.J., and member of RW's Science Advisory Board



Dr. Richard T. Braver
 Reconstructive Foot & Ankle Surgery
 Podiatrist, Orthopedic Specialist

140 Grand Avenue Englewood, NJ 07631 Fax (201) 569-3536 (201) 569-7672	4-14 Saddle River Road Suite 103 Fair Lawn, NJ 07410 (201) 791-1881	51 Riverdale South Riverdale South Bldg. Riverdale, NJ 07457 (973) 831-1774
---	--	--

Please forward all correspondence to the Englewood Address
 E-mail: DrRun@aol.com
 WEBSITE: WWW.DRRUN.COM

Ask the Editor



Q: When is the best time to stretch? Before or after a run? And is there a "right" way to stretch?
M.A., SCRANTON, PA.

A: We often field stretching questions at RUNNER'S WORLD. So frequently, in fact, that we've created a handy stretching guide for inquiring readers. Here it is:

- The act of stretching is more important than the method you use.
- You may choose from several legitimate stretching methods (static, active-isolated, yoga-style, etc.). Try them and see which feels best for you.
- Research shows that you should hold a stretch for a maximum of 15 to 30 seconds. Longer than that won't hurt, but there's not much benefit, either.
- You should stretch when muscles and tendons are warm, which means after a warmup or after your run.
- Stretching probably helps prevent injuries.
- Stretching also may improve performance indirectly (i.e., if you're injured less, you're able to train more).

—Adam Bean, RUNNER'S WORLD managing editor

Reprinted with Permission by Runners World