

CNN Health Women Risk Snapped Ligaments for Shoe Fashion

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By Madison Park, CNN

Despite sprains, foot pains and blisters,

towering footwear has legions of loyal female fans. Among them are pop stars who dance intricate choreography wearing colossal shoes. Lady Gaga wore a pair of staggering 12-inch Alexander McQueen heels in her music video “Bad Romance.” The theatrical shoes she wore were unveiled by the late British designer McQueen last fall, prompting some models to decline to walk the runway for him.

“We have entered a moment of heightened impracticality in footwear,” said Elizabeth Semmelhack, author of “Heights of Fashion: A History of the Elevated Shoe.” Heels tend to get higher during economic recessions, she added.

Recent studies have affirmed the relationship between foot problems and high heels.

-- A Harvard study published in the October issue of *Arthritis Care & Research* found that 29 percent of 1,900 women reported generalized foot pain. The research showed that those who chose to wear uncomfortable shoes early in life suffered with foot pain in later years, while men did not experience the same type of foot pain as women.

They look cute and because fashion is pain.

--Megan Forlines, fashion student on why she wears heels

Forlines said she doesn't worry about such health problems. She took a high heel recovery course that trains women to walk in heels. Tim Driscoll, founder and director of Backbone and Wingspan, a New York studio, started the class that incorporates Pilates-based exercises.

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Women often treat their feet like blocks to stuff into their shoes and push all their weight into the front of the feet, he said.

“Draw the heel back and get in touch with the hamstring,” Driscoll advised.

Driscoll's advice on walking easier with heels

Forlines changed her posture and weight distribution on her feet. They used to ache immediately after putting on her red glitter Christian Louboutins, but now they only tire after hours of standing.

It's “bearable pain,” she said.