Dear Alice —

I am in need of bunion surgery, and it is something I must get done in the near future. My question is this: Will I be able to wear high heeled shoes again? I've gotten away from the pointed toes, but I do love high heels.

Answer

Dear Reader,

Wearing high heels can make you look taller, which may be good for your self-confidence, but high heels are not good for your feet. Though high-heeled shoes don’t necessarily cause bunions, there is evidence to suggest that wearing shoes that are too tight can aggravate bunions and make them worse. It is believed that the tendency to get bunions is hereditary and bunions are the result of imbalances in the foot that cause increased pressure in the joints. Over a long period of time and in combination with footwear that is not supportive, bunions can appear.

Women are more likely to have bunions and some attribute this to women wearing more tight high-heeled shoes. To avoid bunions you can:

- Wear wide, deep shoes that provide good support for your feet.
- Avoid high heels.
- Avoid shoes that don’t have enough toe room/are too small for your feet.

Some people with bunions resort to surgery to alleviate the pain and discomfort, and to be able to wear shoes that they couldn't wear before. However, only 60 percent of patients that undergo bunion surgery can wear unlimited shoes. Bunion surgery cannot make the foot completely normal, but can improve motion and alignment of the big toe and correct the deformity.

Your results and whether you can wear the high heels you love post-surgery depends on the type of surgery you are having and the advice of your surgeon. Many patients will not be able to wear tight fitting shoes after surgery, including high heels; though there is some evidence that heels under 6 centimeters (or 2.5 inches) are OK. Talk with your surgeon before the operation about your expectations, and what may have caused your bunions. Knowing what to expect and how to
prevent bunions in the future will help you avoid additional surgeries, even if it means appearing a little less tall. If you really want to wear high heels and your surgeon does not object, try to keep the heel to 2.5 inches or less. Not only will this likely keep your feet happy, but it's probably a lot easier to walk in shorter heels!

Alice!
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Published date:
Aug 08, 2008
Last reviewed on:
May 27, 2015

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