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Keep Boot Heels Low This Winter to Prevent Foot & Ankle Injuries

Women's winter boots with high, spiked heels and narrow, pointed toes may seem like the epitome of haute couture, but these boots can make feet and ankles unstable on snow- and ice-covered surfaces.

Falls from high-heeled winter boots can lead to a number of injuries, depending on how you lose your balance. If your ankles roll inward or outward, they can break. If your ankles twist, ligaments can be stretched or torn, causing an ankle sprain. Slipping or falling in high-heeled boots can also cause broken toe, metatarsal and heel bones.

Opt for a low-heeled boot this winter, and be sure to scuff up the soles of new boots or buy adhesive rubber soles to provide greater traction.

No matter what style of boot you decide to wear this season, if you suffer a fall, contact your foot and ankle surgeon (find one at FootHealthFacts.org) for prompt evaluation and treatment and follow the **RICE (Rest, Ice, Compression, Elevation)** protocol:

REST. Stay off the injured foot since walking can cause further damage.

ICE. To reduce swelling and pain, apply a bag of ice over a thin towel to the affected area. Do not put ice directly against the skin. Use ice for 20 minutes and then wait at least 40 minutes before icing again.

COMPRESSION. An elastic wrap should be used to control swelling.

ELEVATION. Keep the foot elevated to reduce the swelling. It should be even with or slightly above your heart level.



Cold Weather Tips for Diabetic Foot Care



If you are living with diabetes, the onset of winter can be dangerous for your feet. Colder temperatures combined with poor blood circulation and possible nerve damage in your extremities can make your feet vulnerable to infection, serious complications or possible amputation.

1. Keep feet dry. Take these precautions to keep your feet healthy throughout the season: Moisture that collects between your socks and your feet and toes can form bacteria, which can cause an infection. If heavy snow and slush have soaked your shoes or boots, change out of your wet socks as soon as possible and towel dry your feet, paying close attention to the area between your toes.

2. Moisturize your feet. Use a moisturizer daily to keep dry skin from itching or cracking. Do not moisturize between your toes as this could lead to a fungal infection.

3. Avoid direct heat to your feet. Everyday activities during winter weather, such as warming your feet by the fire or adjusting the heat on your feet in a car, can pose problems. With numbness caused by nerve damage, you may not be able to feel when your feet get too hot, which can result in second- or third-degree burns on your feet.

The best way to avoid burning your feet is to keep them away from direct heat. Do not use warming aids, such as electric blankets, heated shoe inserts or heating pads, and do not put your feet in hot water. Test bath water with your hands or a thermometer first. A foot and ankle surgeon can also recommend moisture-wicking socks to keep your feet dry and warm.

4. Get the right shoes. Wear well-fitting shoes with supportive soles and a wide toe box to reduce cramping. During the colder seasons, consider how sock texture and the weather will affect walking conditions.

5. See your local foot and ankle surgeon for regular foot exams. Foot and ankle surgeons can help detect any diabetes-related foot issues early on so they do not become problematic.

Visit FootHealthFacts.org to find a foot and ankle surgeon near you.

Low Vitamin D Levels Can Increase Your Risk of Foot Fractures



Shorter days and long, cold nights during the winter can limit your sun exposure and often lead to lower vitamin D levels in your body. Inadequate levels of vitamin D can in turn increase your risk of suffering a stress fracture in your feet.

Calcium is often touted as the best nutrient for building bone density. However, vitamin D manages the calcium you intake and allows the body to absorb both calcium and phosphate. This is what build your bones.

If your vitamin D levels are low, the weightbearing bones in your feet and ankles are easily affected because they are not strong enough to withstand the pressure of supporting your body.

Many patients who are treated for foot fractures and who also have low vitamin D levels are typically over age 50, are overweight, have limited sun exposure or a darker complexion or live with a medical condition that causes fat malabsorption.

To increase your vitamin D levels without increasing your sun exposure, eat fortified foods to reach the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's recommended daily amount of 400 IUs of vitamin D.

If you are experiencing frequent foot fractures or unexplained foot pain and are concerned about your vitamin D levels, schedule an appointment with your foot and ankle surgeon. If you need one, visit FootHealthFacts.org.

Skiing or Skating This Winter? Keep Feet & Ankles Safe from Injury

Skiing at a resort or gliding across an indoor ice rink makes for great winter recreation. But to make sure you finish your day with a mug of hot cocoa instead of a cast and crutches, follow these handy tips:

1. Make sure skates, ski boots or snowboard boots fit properly. Lace up ice skates tightly enough to give your ankle proper support.
2. If you have not skated, skied or snowboarded since last winter, do specific exercises two weeks ahead of time to condition the muscles used in each particular sport. A foot and ankle surgeon can recommend stretching and strengthening exercises to get you back in shape.
3. Never engage in winter sports alone. Always have someone with you so s/he can seek help immediately if you are injured.

If you suffer an injury, contact your local foot and ankle surgeon to determine if it is a sprain, fracture or stretched/torn tendon or ligament. Without prompt treatment, these conditions could lead to chronic ankle stability, arthritis, tissue damage or problems with foot alignment.

Visit FootHealthFacts.org before you participate in any winter sports this season to locate a foot and ankle surgeon in your area.



Visit FootHealthFacts.org for more information on keeping your feet & ankles healthy. Plus, you can also use the site's Find a Physician search tool to locate a foot & ankle surgeon near you.

