

I will admit it, I love beautiful shoes and high heels just happen to fall into that category for me. The fact that I am 5'2" and anything that will give me any added bonus to my height challenges I tend to like. Plus, I love the sound that they make on a marble floor: click, click, click. But by the end of a day of wearing my 'beautiful' shoes, my dogs are barking. Should I know better? Yes. Will it change my habits of wearing high heels? No. But I have educated myself enough to understand how to treat my feet properly if I am going to abuse them on a regular basis. Foot pain is not "beautiful".

Don't get me wrong; I don't live in my high heels, like some people do. In fact, I spend more time in bare feet when I am at home and when I worked as a Personal Trainer I went through running shoes on a bi-monthly basis. But, now that I have re-entered the corporate world (ironically working for a company that specializes in developing products to strengthen feet and ankles), you can bet that I will have something on my feet that will give me some height. I draw the line at stilettos. I am, after all, a 46-year-old mom of 3, and I do need to act my age. But I like the 2 – 2 ½ inch range for heels. Are my feet tired at the end of the day? Yes. So, how do I remedy the situation?

I used to stick my feet in a bucket of ice if I had been standing all day in high heels at a trade show. In fact, it was the only way I could get my feet in my shoes the next day. Then, I started using a tennis ball to roll out my feet and instituted a stretching program after I heard about other women rupturing their Achilles tendons by wearing high heels and then quickly changing to a flat shoe. Still, even ice and stretching didn't solve my problems and by day 3 of the trade show the dogs would be barking, not to mention my knees, hips and back.

Since joining the AFX team I've come to better appreciate the incredible importance of foot strength and I have been using my AFX to stretch and strengthen my feet. I can sit on my comfy couch at the end of the day and work through 10 minutes or so of exercises that make my feet stronger. I follow the Health and Injury prevention program (<http://www.afx-online.com/training/videos-programs/>). In addition, I still go barefoot when at home and do weight-bearing exercises on my beloved Bosu.

I am happy to say that now whether I am strapping on my black patent leather sandals, heading out for a run, or clicking into my ski boots, my feet, knees, hips and back are now thanking me for paying some extra care and attention to the dogs and who knows, with Valentine's coming, I am thinking red ... stilettos.

~ Ruth Voss, MA, CSCS