



# Higher Ground

Want to dance the night away in your favourite stilettos and in absolute comfort? Yes, you can, thanks to the experts from The Bone & Joint Centre

You can't live without your Choos and Blahniks, and we don't blame you. The right pair of high heels gives us a bolstered sense of confidence, and makes heads turn.

But what if your high-heeled shoes and stilettos were causing you pain each time you take a step? Everyone wants to look good, but does it have to come with a painful price?

Absolutely not, says Dr Kevin Koo (pictured below right), the director and consultant orthopaedic surgeon at The Bone & Joint Centre located at Mount Elizabeth Medical Centre, Singapore.

According to Dr Koo, the long-term use of high heels, pointed footwear and ill-fitting shoes

can lead to problems such as bunions—that red painful bump at the joint of your big toe. “A bunion is a deformity of the big toe where it drifts or deviates outwards and towards the second toe,”

says Dr Koo. “As a result, a bony bump forms at the base of the big toe which, over time, can become inflamed and painful.”

And if left untreated, bunions can make it difficult for you to wear shoes, affect your mobility and even result in the “overlapping” of your other toes. So what causes bunions? Besides shoes with narrow fronts and high heels, Dr Koo shares that family history can also increase your chances.

While there are non-surgical ways to treat your bunion problem, such as wearing shoes with a broader front, taking anti-inflammatory medication or wearing toe splints, Dr Koo adds that the problem with bunions is that once they occur, they have the potential to become more severe with time. And when that happens, surgery may be the only option.

Traditionally, surgeons would have to make an incision between 5cm to 8cm in length to correct the deformity. While effective, this procedure is painful and could result in keloids or wound infections during recovery.

Fortunately, there is now an innovative, minimally-invasive “keyhole” technique to correct your bunions. This breakthrough surgery is able to correct bunions via a few small

incisions, each between 2 mm and 4 mm in length. However, Dr Koo highlights that this less invasive surgical option is only suitable for mild to moderate bunions. So early diagnosis and treatment will help you benefit from this technique.

“Our feet perform essential functions such as supporting our body weight, providing balance, shock absorption and locomotion like walking, running and jumping. Ultimately, having healthy feet allows you to have quality of life, productive work and regular physical activity,” he explains.

To ensure that each step you take is a comfortable one, Dr Koo suggests to consider switching to sandals with thicker heels, as opposed to pointed-toe stilettos, or platform shoes with little or no incline, putting less stress on the toes. Moreover, he adds, “Choose shoes that are made with genuine leather—it is softer, won't feel as constricting on your toes and will fit the shape of your feet better.”



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