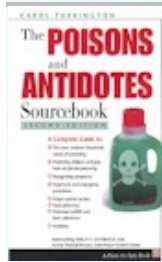


HND Television

The television division of Health News Digest.

Book Reviews



The Poisons and Antidotes Sourcebook

[Read now!](#)

Correspondents

Are you interested in becoming a contributor to HealthNewsDigest.

[Click here](#)

Interactive

[Chat](#)

[Discussion](#)

[Stocks](#)

[Submit News](#)

[Contact Us](#)

Become An Advertiser!

[Click Here For Information](#)

[Click here to learn how to advertise on this site.](#)

Feet - Are They Getting Wider?

IT'S NOT JUST OUR WAISTS THAT ARE GETTING BIGGER . . .

NEW YORK, N.Y. -- (HealthNewsDigest.com)...Dr. Oliver Zong, a Manhattan based podiatrist, is seeing an increase in the number of patients who complain of foot problems related to wide feet. The question arises, -Are people's feet really wider these days? Dr. Zong, Director of NYC Footcare, believes the answer is yes. Some of the reasons for this increase include weight gain, an aging population and a cultural shift.

No one can deny that people are generally larger today than in years past. With the focus on nutrition and health starting at a younger age, children are taller and larger today than they were at the same age years ago. The growing problem of obesity in America has also helped to lay the groundwork for wider, larger feet.

Wondering how obesity can make your feet larger? Dr. Zong states, "By placing more pressure (ie. weight) on your feet as you stand or walk, the joints and ligaments have to work harder to maintain the structure of your feet. The more pressure your feet must accommodate, the more your feet will splay or stretch out when you bear weight. Over time, your feet will stop "bouncing back" to their normal shape and their size will eventually become wider. "Aging also plays a role in the increasing widths of feet. As ligaments and soft tissue begin to weaken, feet grow wider." Both age and weight have had a role in the widening of America's feet.

Physiologically, women have a tendency towards wider feet due to pronation. Pronation is when the inside of the foot, the arch area, rolls inward towards the ground. Because women tend to have a wider hip structure, pronation is more common among women than men. This forces the legs to angle inward at the knees, which in turn can lead to pronation at the feet. If a woman is overpronated it will give her the appearance of flat feet. Pronated feet are wider than unpronated feet.

Pregnancy is another reason why women more frequently complain about having wider feet. During pregnancy, hormones are released in the body to relax soft tissue structures such as ligaments. The natural weight gain experienced during pregnancy along with hormonal changes, make it common for a woman's shoe size to increase during her

pregnancy term. As Dr. Zong explains, "Although wide feet have always been a potential problem for women, culture and attitude have increased awareness and led to an in-flux of complaints."

Society's New Attitude

Expectations of what is acceptable have changed with the increase of education being put forth by podiatrists, orthopedists, and pedorthists. "People used to believe that stylish shoes should feel uncomfortable and that painful feet were something that came along with the job. That is no longer the case," says Dr. Zong. People have taken the advice of foot professionals and are now demanding shoes that are comfortable. Nowadays, people no longer "put up" with foot pain. They are seeking treatment and heeding the advice of foot professionals by wearing comfortable shoes. The demand for comfort is an attitude that has changed the shoe industry. As baby boomers get older and wider (around the waist and the feet) shoe companies have had no choice but to react. Although people are shying away from tight, ill-fitting shoes, they are not necessarily opting for "orthopedic shoes" either. According to Dr. Zong, "To meet this new demand, shoe companies have created lines that are both stylish and comfortable. Being foot smart and feet chic are no longer mutually exclusive."

Today's Changed Culture

As the workday continues to get longer, so does the time that many people spend on their feet, walking for long hours and standing on hard surfaces. Women are also a much larger part of the workforce. "With the predisposition for women to have foot problems coupled with longer work days, it's no wonder my office is filled with women of all ages complaining about the agony of their feet," says Dr. Zong.

Another reason feet width is increasing is due to foot deformities such as bunions and hammertoes, which are often the result of wearing ill-fitting shoes. Since baby boomers make up the largest segment of the population, it is no surprise that one of their biggest complaints is an increase in foot width. These deformities are found more commonly in older adults. Certain health conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, and circulatory problems can also lead to swollen ankles and feet.

Because feet can change size as people get older or wider, Dr. Zong recommends having your feet measured prior to buying new shoes. If you have wide feet, they should be accommodated with wide width shoes. Lace up shoes will also provide increased flexibility. Once your feet have widened, the only real corrective measure is surgery. "Foot slimming procedures can be performed to eliminate bunions and correct hammertoes. After having surgery, patients will often come back to my office an entire shoe size smaller," states Dr. Zong.

A word to the wise the next time you head out to buy those trendy new heels, factor comfort ahead of style and let your feet do the walking!

Dr. Oliver Zong

212-385-2400

29 John Street, Suite 201

New York, NY 10038