

# Style now, pay later: Popular shoe could be bad

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

COLUMBUS, Ind. — The colorful high-heeled, pointy-toed shoes with sparkles, sequins, rhinestones and skinny straps are stylish, sexy and a fun fashion accessory.

But what effect are they having on women's feet?

Dr. Michael Mull, a podiatrist for more than 25 years, estimates 90 percent of his patients' problems are due to wearing improper footwear.

The problem is not exclusive to young women in their teens and 20s wanting to look like "Sex in the City" stars.

"I've had women in their 80s here in my office with three-inch pumps," Mull said.

Another big problem is women wearing the wrong size of shoe, thinking if they wore a size 7 at age 20, they

still wear the same size at 50.

"As we get older, our feet get wider and longer," Mull said.

Problems are not limited to high heels, however.

Too many people buy ill-fitting shoes at department stores with no one assisting them with measurement or fit.

Years ago, the shoe store experience included sitting down in a comfy chair with a knowledgeable sales associate measuring the feet then going back to the storage room to bring back several styles and sizes for comparison.

Mull sees some local factory workers who buy their required steel-toed shoes off a truck.

That concerns him because the workers often stand on their feet for an eight-hour shift, and the shoes have no

"give."

He said belief that shoes need to be "broken in" is not true. They should fit properly and comfortably from the start.

Problems caused or aggravated by shoes can include bunions, hammer toes, blisters, calluses, corns, fallen arches, Achilles tendonitis, ingrown toenails, heel spurs and even knee and back aches.

Fixes range from buying new shoes to physical therapy, exercises and surgery.

"Foot discomfort can be greatly reduced or completely eliminated by purchasing properly fitting shoes," Mull said.

Although men and women have problems, women are nine times more likely to have certain types of foot problems.

One study showed 88 percent of women wore shoes that were too small for them and 80 percent had foot pain because of their shoes.

When Jerri Chalfant of Columbus began having back problems several years ago, she bought a pair of Birkenstock shoes.

Although the shoes cost more than \$100, her back problems improved and the shoes never wore out.

"I look at it as an investment," Chalfant said.

She is a regular shopper at Pampered Foot on 25th Street where she likes how owner Christie Crippen takes special care and patience to ensure she has a properly fitting shoe.

Many of Crippen's customers have been referred by physicians, including those

who have worn too many high heels or have jobs where they stand all day.

Others have been diagnosed with foot problems and need a specialty shoe.

The brands Crippen carries, including Birkenstock, Finn and Noat, have arch and heel support and a wide toe area.

"A lot of what we do is edu-

cation," Crippen said.

She explains how the front ball of a woman's foot endures significant pressure when wearing high heels and how toes can be damaged when squeezed into narrow, pointy-toed shoes.

"It's just too much stress and pressure on the foot," Crippen said.

# Green now isn't just a color in fashion

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — There's a segment of the organic goods market that buys things out of environmental consciousness, while others buy for the social values the organic industry promotes. Increasingly, though, organic goods are being bought by the average Joe, happy to get something green as long as it looks, feels and costs the same as the things he's used to.

In fashion, organic cotton led the way into the mainstream. This winter, it's being closely followed by organic wool, which is available in Patagonia sweaters and Delano Collection coats, among others.

"We see demand growing exponentially. It started with the outdoor industry and now it's Patagonia for sweaters, Fox River for socks, and there'll be a lot more," says Matthew Mole, founder and president of Vermont Organic Fiber Co., based in Middlebury, Vt.

"In the last four to six months there's been a spike in fashion-forward brands," he adds. "As long as the quality is there, there's no argument not to do it. There is a price premium built in because we think farmers who are taking the extra steps to be the stewards of the land deserve to be compensated, but people seem willing to pay it."

Vermont Organic Fiber currently is developing fine worsted wool for suits, heavier fabrics for coats and a jersey for diaper covers. Children's clothes could be a hot market because parents are always looking to put the purest products next to their

babies' skin, but Mole is still working out the kinks when it comes to the washability of the wool.

Mole, who was raised on a small farm, became familiar with the organic and natural fiber market while he was a research assistant at the University of Vermont studying hemp. He saw that cotton had a monopoly on the organic marketplace. "There needed to be something else," he says. "As a consumer, I knew I wanted to wear more than

just cotton."

Knowing that sheep were already being raised organically for the food market, he figured organic wool would be the next logical step.


"Growers often produce product but there's a disconnect with brands that want to use it. I said, 'There's fiber and there's customers—let's link them.'"

After talking to farmers, Mole identified mills in the U.S. that could immediately begin processing according to

organic handling rules, plants that were already using plant-based soaps and plant-based oils in the spinning instead of petroleum.

Then he went to the fashion companies.

Last year, Patagonia sold out of its limited collection of organic wool sweaters and it looks like the same will happen this year even though the company ordered more garments, says Jill Dumain, director of environmental analysis at Patagonia.



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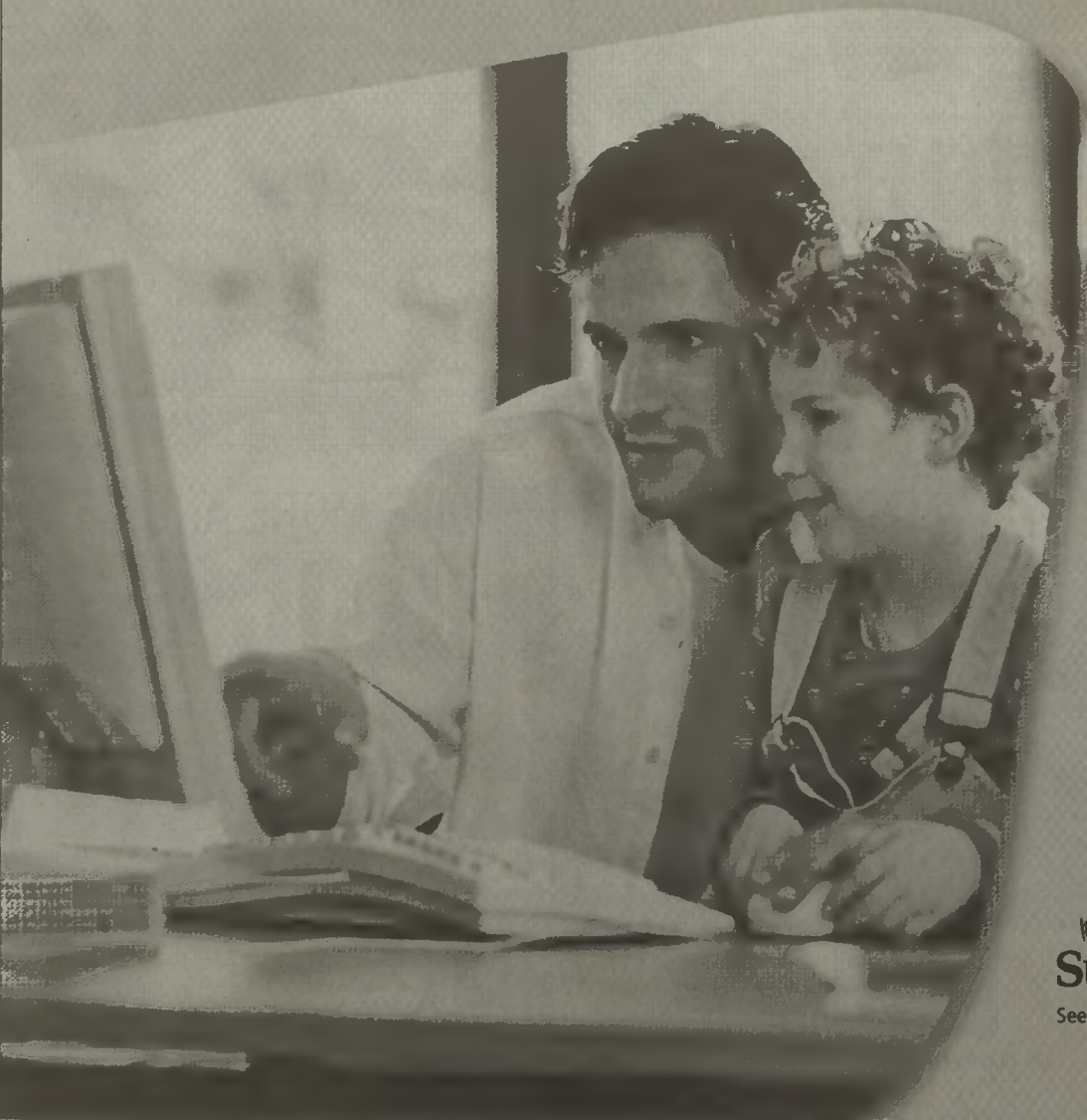
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# School bans dance

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ples grind against one another, often front to back, while moving across the dancefloor. Students now must face one another when they dance.

At least one parent complained about students grinding at this year's homecoming dance, but Reynolds said school administrators had been concerned for some time.

"Every year, the dancing gets a little more (suggestive), and the music kids are listening to contains more and more of what we are banning," Reynolds said. "We know what parents' expectations would be, and what our own are as well."

Some students argue that the policy is more inappropriate than the forms of expression it restricts.

"They're taking away from our teenage culture," said sophomore Scott Fowler, 16.

He added that many of today's teachers and administrators danced and listened to music that their own parents found objectionable.

"Elvis' music and dancing was considered to be sexually oriented back then," Fowler said.