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IS RUNNING BAD FOR YOUR KNEES?

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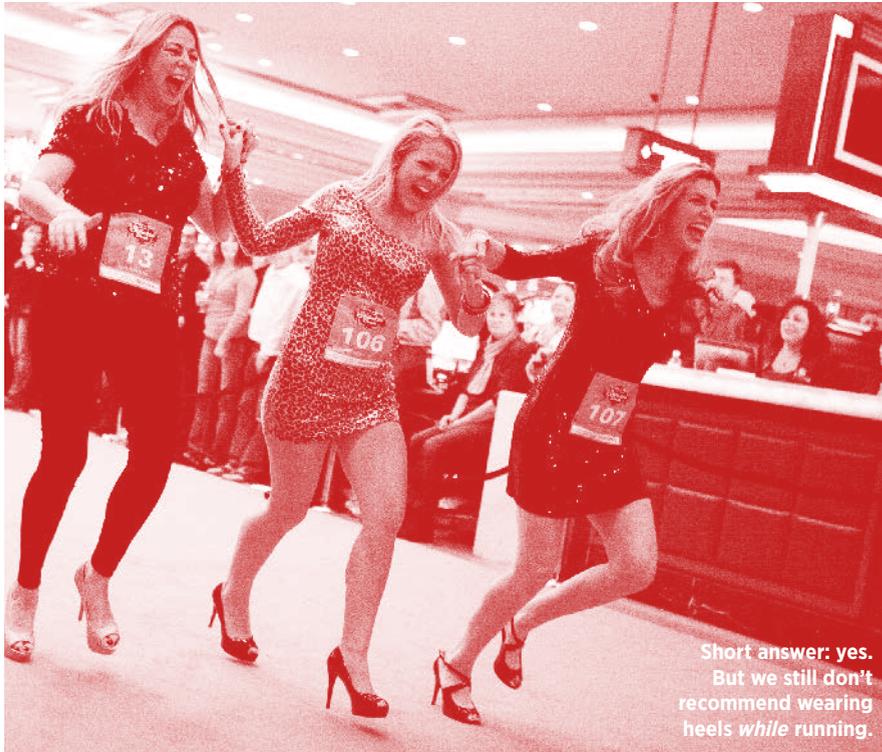
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Who's That Girl?
IT'S OUR COVER MODEL CONTEST WINNER!

Find Out Why This Mother Runner Beat Out 2,000 Other Hopefuls

* | *Nobody's perfect! But sometimes a simple tip can change your running life.*

Should runners wear heels?



Short answer: yes. But we still don't recommend wearing heels *while* running.

Get to the Point

We've all heard that wearing high heels isn't great for your tootsies. Sometimes you need to channel your inner Carrie Bradshaw, so we consulted Dr. Lee Cohen, a sports medicine podiatrist in New Jersey, for some do's and don'ts.

The Real Problem

With the heel of your foot jacked up at an angle, Dr. Cohen explains there's a lack of shock absorption. A three-inch heel puts seven times the force to the front of the foot as a one-incher—and if your toes are squished into a point, that exacerbates the force. Heels also can affect your knees—a shoe boost of just one-and-a-half inches increases knee torque, which can relate to osteoarthritis.

But there's a twist!



Cohen says, "Heels work well for those women suffering from any type of arch pain or plantar fasciitis because the heels decrease the vector of force pulling on the Achilles tendon, which attaches to the back and bottom of the heel."

Can Heels and Miles Mix?

Cohen doesn't totally nix the idea of runners wearing heels. But he says if you do like to sport stilettos, you need to regularly stretch your calves while paying attention to any discomfort. Pain in the back and bottom of your foot can lead to issues, such as plantar fasciitis or heel spur pain, and pain toward your toes can result in a pinched nerve or bunions. If these become an issue, it's time to back off. **WR**



Heed the Rules

- Don't wear high heels all the time. Think moderation!
- Do buy shoes with a wide base for your toes—look for a trapezoid, not a triangle—and a cushioned heel.
- Don't buy slingbacks, which lack heel support.
- Do add cushioning with insoles, which help transfer weight off the balls of your feet.
- Don't don your highest wedges during your commute—switch into flats or sneakers to give your feet a break.
- Do stretch and strengthen daily if you have any kind of foot or arch pain; otherwise three times a week is sufficient, or twice along with a good yoga class. Dr. Cohen offers these three exercises:
 - Alphabet Script**
Keeping your leg still, use your toes to write the alphabet.
 - Circles**
Make five slow circles with your foot in each direction.
 - Napkin Drop**
Pick up a napkin with your toes, drop it and repeat for a minute.