

Doc puts feet before fashion

By Joseph Wenzel IV
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Meriden- Dr. Tina Boucher is always looking at people's footwear. She's not trying to check out the latest fashions though.

Boucher, a podiatrist, says most people can help their feet just by changing their shoes. Foot care conditions can be improved dramatically, she told a group of educators at John Barry School last month.

"I am always looking at people's footwear when they come into the office," said Boucher, who owns Central Connecticut Foot Care Center, LLC, at 440 W. Main St. "Most people in their life will have a foot problem."

Men are more likely to practice good footwear procedures than women, she said. Boucher could think of three women patients who have foot problems but continue to wear high heels.

"It's difficult for some women. Women want to wear nice shoes with nice heels," Boucher said. "They won't give it up." She advises her clients that it is OK to wear high-heels shoes for special occasions and nights out on the town, but she recommends that women do not wear them every day.

Meghan Wininger was one person who was not giving up her high-heels. Wininger, 26, has an enormous collection of shoes, mostly with 3 ½ to 4 ½- inch heels.

"I can't live without them," Wininger said. "I am not giving them up anytime soon."

Wininger said the high heels elongate her legs and that makes her feel good. Recently, she fell in love with a pair of boots that were smaller than her normal size. She didn't buy them though.

"I wanted them," she said. But she said she realizes women have problems with their feet because they won't go above a certain shoe size.

"I don't know how women wear them every day, all day," Wininger said. She takes off her high-heels when driving and wears flip-flops.

Boucher had some advice about buying footwear: People should buy their shoes at the end of the day to allow for normal day swelling. The end of the day is also time when a person's feet are the longest.

If shoes don't fit well at the store, they won't get better, because feet get wider with age, Boucher said.

When selecting walking shoes, people should avoid those that bend too much. Walking shoes should never twist in the middle and should have a stiff heel.

"Don't buy it for your sake but for your feet's sake," Boucher said.

One of the worst things for foot care is the flip-flop. In September, Boucher sees many cases of people having heel and foot problems such as blisters. Often those people walk into her office wearing flip-flops, which do not provide any arch support for the foot.