



Style

For Commuters, Choice In Footwear

Meghan Casserly, 06.01.09, 5:45 PM ET

The phrase "commuting shoe" is enough to send many professional women over the footwear-edge, haunted by visions of modern day *Working Girl* troops in laced up New Balances or pedicure-exposing Havaianas.

While the silhouette of a stiletto looks infinitely more stylish and commanding than a running shoe or thong sandal, professional women making their way into office-buildings in cities and suburbs across the country in comfortable shoes have the right idea. "Wearing heels will change a person's center of gravity," says Dr. Robin Ross, D.P.M., a practicing podiatrist and spokeswoman for the New York State Podiatric Medical Association. Altering the balanced position of your body can lead to falls, sprains and breaks, not to mention back pain. The many effects of tight high-heels read like a laundry list of unsightliness: bursitis, bunions and corns included.

But is there a middle ground between angry, callused feet and the self-consciousness of sportswear commuting?

In Pictures: The Best Commuting Shoes

Blogger Laura Schooler, of [Guerilla Shopper](#) is one of the millions of professional women who bypass this fashion dilemma by wearing comfortable flats on the commute and changing at the office into what she calls her "good shoes." She carries her Elie Tahari pumps when she walks to the office each day in flats, but is careful to bring them home with her in case she wants to wear them out at night.

Kate McKenna, on the other hand, in international equity sales in New York, admits that, more often than not, her shoes "never leave the office at the end of the day. All I want to do is take them off! Then I'm forced to wear flats or Pumas to work ... since I have literally no heels at my apartment."

This season's crop of flats comes in bright colors to pair with any outfit and shapes easy enough to stow in your bag. One new company, CitiSoles, started by two New York University students, Susie Levitt and Katie Shea, offers a new twist: A ballet flat with a rubber sole that splits in the center, making it easier to fold and tuck into a zippered pouch, which also unfurls into a tote for carrying high heels home at night.

Changing your footwear throughout the day is a real concern. Vyctoria Thwreath, founder and chief lifestyle officer of Vyctoria's Answer, a personal concierge service based in Boston, tells us that she often needs as many as three different pairs of shoes to weather the activities her day might throw at her. "I can start out my day in a meeting (flats) then have an afternoon appointment with someone in their home (comfortable shoes like tennis shoes) and then the evening might entail a dinner/networking event (heels)." Her car serves double duty as a shoe closet.

Thwreath's hectic schedule involves hours of driving, and she is quick to stress that she always drives barefoot, so as not to "scuff the finish or weaken the heels." Podiatrist Jacqueline Sutera applauds her choice, citing high heels as a potential cause for gas- or break-pedal-related accidents.

Some of us are stubborn. When Kim McGowan, co-founder of the new sale-tracking Web site [Markdown Alert](#), was commuting to and from her office in Philadelphia, she walked nearly a mile each way from the train station to her office--and always in her office shoes. "The only times I ever considered carrying my work shoes, rather than wearing them, were in cases of bad weather."

McGowan's top secrets are a thicker heel and ankle straps: "When you like your heels high, a thick heel or a wedge are much easier to walk in and are comfortable for all-day wear." And if you're set on stilettos, "Pick a Mary Jane style or one with an ankle strap for stability and support. There's also less of a chance losing your heel in a steam-grate!"