

Note: "Exclusivo Online" (www.exclusivo.com.br) is a Brazilian website, specialized in news of the fashion and footwear sectors.

Girls and High-Heels: a premature relationship

Young girls who wear high heels frequently no longer causes surprise, but many people are unaware of the problems this habit can bring. This is one of the points highlighted in the master dissertation defended by physiotherapist Patricia de Oliveira Pezzan, at University of Sao Paulo Medical School. The reason? The specialist explains that during childhood and adolescence many changes occur in terms of the body adjustments that are necessary to the structuring and definition of the body. According to her, posture undergoes changes due to hormonal influences that take place with the onset of puberty and skeletal-muscle growth. Thus, the pre-pubertal and pubertal phases are crucial to the development of good posture. In addition, changes in overload during this phase may interfere with the performance of the locomotor apparatus. "Among the factors that influence those variables is the use of high heels, that is becoming increasingly premature and frequent in this population", she explains.

The results of her study indicate that adolescents users of high heels, as they suffer an overload in legs joints, muscles and bones, end up altering their walking pattern in order to keep their balance. Patricia says that high heels affect the alignment of both the spine and body and the natural and correct way of walking, leading to changes that can cause future problems such as pain and muscles and joints dysfunction. Considering that the study population was girls in the growth phase, analysis of postural and biomechanics data can render support to therapeutic and preventive procedures.

Orthopaedist and surgeon Denys Aragao (Brasilia/DF) alters that great care is never too much. According to him, 50% of her patients complain of back or knee pain due to the constant use of heels. "Children should absolutely never wear high heels", he warns. An important factor and which many parents do not pay attention to, according to the physician, is that the use of heels should only begin after the girls first menstruation, as this is when body growth will be settled. "Actually, the use of high heels for prolonged hours, many times a week, can bring problems in any age", he stresses.

Parents should set limits even to fashion

Between allowing everything and allowing kids to make their own choices or being inflexible, to the point of not giving children any autonomy, there is a process in which parental education is vital. In an interview to *Exclusivo Kids*, psychologist Livia Maria Martins Pontes, talks about the concerns and care parents need in order to guide children without becoming authoritarian.

Exclusivo Kids – Why parents cannot set limits to children in some aspects, for instance, with the use of high heels?

Livia Maria Martins Pontes – Often because they are afraid of seeming authoritarian or because they do not want to deal with their children complaints. Hence, they sometimes end up being too lax and confusing the roles of parents with that of friends.

Exclusivo Kids – What are the types of influences that adolescents and children are under that lead them to wanting to wear high heeled shoes?

Livia – Frequently, children are under the influence of their own parents, who place too much value to aesthetics and physical appearance, the media and friends as well.

Exclusivo Kids – Nowadays children and adolescents experience a conflict between authoritarianism learned from parents and freedom imposed by the so called psychologism phenomenon – the lack of limits. How should parents approach this issue?

Livia – It is important that parents keep in mind that they are parents and such role brings responsibilities of guidance and limits setting. Eventually such actions might generate complaints, crying or frowning, but parents should not give into it.

Exclusivo Kids – At the age of four, Suri Cruise is a small celebrity. Each step of Tom Cruise's and Katie Holmes's daughter is recorded. After wearing lipstick and having her nails polished, she was photographed with her mother wearing a 4 centimetre high peep toe. What kind of response should a mother present regarding this example?

Livia – She could remember her daughter that she still is a kid and, as such, she should not wear heels. And it is important that the mother herself is aware that this is a person who is in physical formation and that the abuse of high heels can bring serious consequences and hinder the child's physical development.

Picture legend: Earlier and earlier children wear shoes with high heights, affecting their body structure.