

## Flip-flops are cool and comfy, but wear them with care - NorthJersey.com

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Putting on a pair of shoes and socks in the middle of summer seems too cumbersome (not to mention hot) when you can just slip on a pair of flip-flops and be on your way.



Sandals were the earliest form of footwear, and have endured thousands of years in hundreds of iterations. The word "sandal" itself comes from the Greek word "sandalon," and the Greeks' footwear was made from willow leaves or twigs.

The counterpart was the gladiator sandal, worn by their rivals, the Romans. These open-toed shoes with bands across the

body of the foot, heel and ankle were worn specifically in the gladiator arena by warriors, and were made of leather and sometimes studded with metal to show status. The modern-day gladiator sandal has had a revival over the past few years, and was often seen on celebrities like the Olsen twins, Kirsten Dunst and Gwyneth Paltrow.

The flip-flop is the most ubiquitous member of the sandal family, but beware before you slide a pair between your toes. Dr. Emanuel Haber, a podiatrist with The Foot and Ankle Centre of New Jersey in Paramus, said flip-flops are fine to wear for a short period of time, but because of their instability, wearing them long-term can cause damage to your arch and even your leg.

"Your feet were not designed to wear them, as flip-flops don't give you any support," Haber said. "You can start to develop arch pain and even leg pain because your muscles are working harder to keep the body stable."

The exposed foot can also leave you vulnerable to bacteria and fungi that a regular shoe would protect against.

"I know patients will continue to wear them no matter what I say because they're comfortable and fun in the summer," Haber said. "But you'll only be comfortable if you're not wearing them for a long time."

There are many reasons people choose flip-flops despite the potential discomfort: They're easy to put on, easy to clean after a day at the beach and can be both inexpensive (who doesn't make an annual trip to Old Navy for their two-for-\$5 sale?) or high-end (Burberry sells a patent leather pair for \$195). Just make sure you're not walking for miles in your favorite pair.