

11 Ways Your Clothes Could Be Killing You

BY [ANNA DE SOUZA](#) 03/01/2018

Did you ever suspect that the sweater you're about to pull over your head could give you a cold, a rash, or worse? Here's how to avoid becoming the ultimate fashion victim.

Toxic fabrics



Man-made fabrics like polyester, nylon, rayon, and acrylic are dripping with dyes and chemicals. "These textiles are made with potentially toxic fibers, particularly those designed with fashion or convenience in mind," explains Gabriella Farkas, MD. "Beware of stain resistant, insect-repelling, flame-retardant, water-repellent, waterproof, perspiration-proof, anti-static, anti-cling, and anti-shrink fabrics." Just to name a few.

The more benefits from said apparel, the more you might be putting yourself to toxic chemicals. "Those chemicals may separate from the clothes, set up shop on your skin, and eventually enter your bloodstream," adds Caleb Backe, health and wellness expert for Maple Holistics. This may spur a rash, but it's even more concerning that the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has found that some chemicals in workout clothing like Dimethylformamide may be linked to liver damage. Opt for natural fibers, ideally organic, such as cotton, wool, silk, flax, and hemp.

High heels



Pumps and t-strap heels are causing you a lot more than just foot pain and blisters—wearing high heels days can actually lead to a shortened calf. When you slide on high heels day-in and day-out, anatomically the ankle becomes raised and the calf muscles contract. As these muscle fibers stiffen and become thicker, it can lead to discomfort when you've opted for flats. Ultimately, shortened calves may force you to walk on your tippy toes when you're barefoot to avoid pain. Beware of the other horrible things high heels may do to your body, too.

Skin tight jeans



You don't need a Renaissance-style lace corset to trigger poor circulation, swollen legs, and blood clots—all you need are skinny jeans. A woman was cut out of her skinnies and hospitalized for four days after suffering numbness in her feet after squatting as she helped a relative move. And a study published in the *Journal of Neurology Neurosurgery & Psychiatry* found that skinny jeans can damage muscle and nerve fibers in the legs. Find out how skinny jeans affect men.

Laundry detergent



Suffering from inexplicable bumps, redness, and rashes? Your laundry routine could be to blame. "Dyes and fragrances in detergent and laundry soaps contain chemicals that clean, deodorize, and disinfect," explains **Jeffrey Fromowitz, MD, a board-certified dermatologist**. "For people with eczema or extremely sensitive skin, even the slightest contact can trigger a reaction." He recommends avoiding dyes, fragrances, and harsh detergents and opting for liquid products, as they

tend to leave fewer residues than powders. Use the "extra rinse" setting on your washing machine and keep your washing machine clean (i.e. lint-, dust-, and mold-free).

What you're not washing



Winter coats, scarves, and gloves that are washed only once per season are teeming with viruses and bacteria that can make you sick. Turns out, you should be washing hats and scarves weekly. Pajamas should be washed daily and neckties that have grazed lunch tables and more should take a tumble every couple of wears, too.

Thongs



The issue with thongs isn't necessarily the design, but what it's composed of. Non-breathable materials trap moisture and can lead to urinary tract infections and yeast infections. Think a cotton crotch will do the trick? Think again. It's just not enough to allow evaporation of moisture that breeds bacteria and helps maintain a healthy vaginal acidity.

Since it *is* skimpy, make sure the next fabric your underwear makes contact with, i.e. skinny jeans, also offer a degree of breathability, too. Check out other underwear mistakes that can mess with your health.

Bulky handbags



When walking with a big, bulky bag, we tend to raise our opposite shoulder to compensate for the weight. According to the *Express Tribune*, this may throw your sway off-kilter and lead to a collapsed foot arch corresponding to your weighted shoulder and a curved spine. This can ultimately lead to shoulder and neck pain, a trapped nerve, radiating pain into the arms, and carpal tunnel syndrome. Cue in back pain and arthritis as well. Consider switching to a backpack or distributing the weight between both shoulders evenly. Find out how to downsize your heavy handbag.

Flip flops



Flip flops are the official mascot of summer, but according to Katy Bowman, a biomechanist and author of *Simple Steps to Foot Pain Relief*, they fall short in a big way. "You have to clench the muscles in your feet the entire time you're wearing them so they don't fall off." This can lead to shortened toe muscles, called hammer toes, and gait and balance changes, and it can affect how your whole body moves. "The 'grip' to keep footwear on makes some toe bones curl up and some down," she adds. "It drives the end of some bones into the ground, creating higher-than-normal pressure which can lead to toe injury over

time." That friction can also lead to corns and calluses over time if there's something for the toes to rub on overtop.

Compression garments



Compression around the midsection can be dangerous, too. Enter: Spanx and other smoothing garments. It can cause heartburn, bloating, gas, and nerve compression. What's more, it can crush your organs and prevent your digestive system from working properly. According to a report by HuffPost, it can even cause blood clots and varicose veins. *And that's not all:* Tight clothing of any sort can also trap moisture on the skin and cause infections and rashes, too.

Wrinkle-free clothing



Need a solid reason to toss that new top in the washer before wearing it to date night? Wrinkle-free clothing may be finished with a layer of formaldehyde, a known carcinogen that is not regulated in the United States. Check out more reasons why you should always wash brand-new clothing before wearing it.

Vintage clothing



What about used clothes whose source is unknown? "Bacteria, parasites, and fungi from a variety of diseases can survive on clothing for extended periods of time," says Dr. Farkas. Substantial heat is typically required to kill off any organisms, and experts recommend tumbling clothing with suspected ticks and other bugs in the dryer for 45 minutes *before* tossing them into the washer.

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