

Gladiator Sandals Could Be Permanently Damaging Your Legs

Learn how to save yourself from strappy sandals.



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Gladiator-style sandals and espadrilles might look effortlessly chic, but they can really stress out your feet, ankles, and calves. (Exhibit A: Kim Kardashian's gladiator feet above.)

Super-tight sandals put pressure on the vein walls, which can slow blood flow back to the heart and cause leg tissues to swell, explains Luis Navarro, M.D., surgeon and medical director of [The Vein Treatment Center](#) in New York City. Because your feet gradually swell throughout the day anyway, almost any strappy shoes — including espadrilles, ankle-high gladiators, and full-on, knee-high gladiators — can lead to blisters or leave their mark in the form of awkward skin impressions known as "gladiator feet."

While a little awkward on the eyes, these strap impressions tend to go away on their own when your shoes come off, which restores regular circulation. (A little foot massage can help get the blood flowing — *juuust* in case your BF wants to lend a hand.)

The real problem is that constricting shoes can leave a permanent (albeit harmless) impression, Dr. Navarro warns: They can instigate or worsen spider veins, the tiny blue blood vessels that swell and become visible through the skin. Tight, strappy shoes are even more likely to leave you with spider veins if you have any of the following conditions: spider veins run in your family, you take hormonal birth control, smoke, stand for long periods of time, or you're obese.



Emre Eldemir

Unfortunately, spider veins are irreversible without treatment such as injections or laser surgery. But you don't have to forgo gladiators to protect yourself. Prevent permanent damage with these tips from Dr. Navarro:

- 1. Use the "two-finger" test when you try on new shoes or buckle old ones.** Insert your pointer and middle finger underneath each strap. If you can wedge them in there comfortably, the straps aren't too tight, and your feet and skin should have ample room to breathe.
- 2. Don't stand for long periods of time in tightly strapped high-heeled shoes.** This can cause blood to pool in the legs, which results in swelling.
- 3. Avoid wearing sadistic sandals daily.** Give your feet and veins a break by switching off between strappy sandals and comfortable, low-heeled shoes, which can help tone your calves to help blood move through your veins more easily.
- 4. Wear shoes that fit.** It sounds obvious, but sharing shoes with a friend who's even one half-size smaller can cause pinching or tightness that aggravates circulatory issues.
- 5. Loosen your buckles every few hours.** Take advantage of adjustable sandals to prevent undue compression.
- 6. Sit periodically throughout the day,** especially when you're wearing heeled gladiators. "The pressure of standing on the heel paired with the straps can block circulation in the feet and legs," Dr. Navarro explains.
- 7. Put your feet up when you can.** Prop your legs up parallel to the ground for at least 20 minutes at a time. (You can easily do this under your desk.) The longer your feet are elevated, the better. And if you're on your feet all day? Prop them 6 inches above your heart during breaks. "It will feel good immediately as it aids in circulation, drains blood flow away from the legs, and relieves pressure from your legs, feet, and veins," Dr. Navarro says.
- 8. Move.** Rotate your ankles and feet, point and flex your toes, and try to walk around at least 10 minutes an hour to promote circulation in the legs.
- 9. Eat less salt and more fiber.** Salt retains water, which promotes swelling, but fiber can help ease constipation, which might otherwise put pressure on the circulatory system.
- 10. Uncross your legs.** Leg crossing constricts veins and puts pressure on the veins, which could make legs swell.