

# Ep #184: Loving Your Flip Flops, Loving Your Feet



## Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Susi Hatley**

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## Ep #184: Loving Your Flip Flops, Loving Your Feet

**Male Announcer:** You're listening to *From Pain to Possibility* with Susi Hatley. You will hear Susi's best ideas on how to reduce or even eradicate your pain and learn how to listen to your body when it whispers so you don't have to hear it scream. And now here's your host, Susi Hatley.

Welcome and welcome back to *From Pain To Possibility*, a podcast that helps you to reduce and eradicate physical pain for yourself and your clients. I'm your host Susi Hatley, and I'm so happy that you're here because today I'm continuing my conversation on the feet. This is episode number two in my feet mini-series, and I ran an original mini-series back in the winter. You can go find that with episodes number 154 to 158. And this week I'm going to be speaking all about flip-flops.

It's summer, it's hot, our feet need breathing room, and flip-flops are so easy to slip on and go. They're so good, aren't they? And for some people, flip-flops are absolutely horrible. All you need to do is even Google flip-flops, foot pain, podiatry, and you'll find a whole lot of podiatrists who will say do not wear flip-flops, they are akin to the devil.

So I want to talk about flip-flops. Especially if you're someone who is wearing them on a consistent basis, you may be considering that you might be getting some strain that you want to relieve. So I want to talk to you today about why that strain might be arising, what might be contributing to it and some things you can do to help yourself recover and recuperate because there are some biomechanical issues that are known about wearing flip-flops.

And if those biomechanical issues are showing up in terms of strain, tension and pain for you, but you really are committed to your flip-flops, then it's really on you to do something with your feet and your calves and your hips and your body to help them recover and recuperate so you can do the thing you love and not have to just push through pain. Because we know what happens when we push through physical pain, right? You typically get more of it.

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And then more compensations build on top of compensations, which lead to more compensations and more tension and more pain. And then we begin to wonder where all this pain came from. And then slowly begins the unwinding process.

So for those of you who are slipping those lovely flip-flops on but you're kind of thinking, hmm, I wonder if this is a good idea, I am not here to suggest that it's not a good idea. I am here to suggest ways you can make your body more comfortable so you can recuperate from the activity called wearing flip-flops for a period of time that might be too long for you.

All right, so I'm all for you enjoying your life, enjoying the footwear that you wear. You can even go back to episode 158 where I talk about how I help my clients. For real, I have had clients come in asking for programs to help them wear their sexy boots, it's all those sexy boots. I am here to help you live the life you want to live and have a life you want to live with either reduced pain or eradicated pain because in my mind, tissue can change. I've seen it happen too many times to ignore. I believe that healing is possible, even with flip-flops.

Now, if you really resonate with what I'm about to share in this episode and as you listen to it you're like, yes, she's onto something that I really resonate with, you might enjoy my foot program that's coming up, the Power of Pure Movement: Strong and Supple Feet, where we're going to be spending a large amount of time really digging into and exploring your feet so that your feet and feel super happy. And I'll give you the link at the end of the episode for where you can explore that.

So we're going to divide this episode into two sections. The first will be on the biomechanical issues that can arise from wearing flip-flops. And the second section will be on what you can do to recuperate and recover on a consistent basis. I'll also provide a couple of YouTube links in my show notes so that you can look at some videos of some sequences that you can explore around your feet.

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And I'll also walk you through a couple of things you can do on this episode so you can actually have some immediate work that you can play with and start to discover what's going on with those feet, calves, hips and body of yours. So let's dig in.

I think the biggest thing that can arise from wearing flip-flops is the toe clenching. There can be toe clenching, toe scrunching and toe curling because when you slide your foot into that flip flop, there's no ankle support, right? And so we need to hold on to the shoe, if we can call it the shoe, in a way that it doesn't fall off.

So a lot of times what can happen is we start to use the toes to be that balancing point. Now, what becomes interesting is with that toe clenching, scrunching and toe curling along with the no ankle support, that can lead to a lot of tightness through the bottom of the foot and lead to plantar fasciitis, heel spurs, chronic calf tightness.

Now, what's interesting is in some of the research that I read, when they looked at wearing flip-flops, what they've often noticed is that there's a shorter stride length. So your gait can change, in some cases quite significantly. And something that they call peak plantar pressure, which is a very commonly used variable to express the amount of load that's going through your foot.

So when you're wearing flip-flops there's an increase of that plantar pressure. And why this is important is that if you don't have the infrastructure in your body, and I mean your whole body here and I'll explain why in a moment. If you're increasing that pressure, and you don't have that infrastructure, you don't have an ability to absorb and dissipate the load.

So if you don't have the ability to absorb and dissipate the load, then where are you taking that load? And so that can lead to issues around ankles, around plantar fasciitis, even through the calves and the knees and elsewhere in your body that you might be even surprised about. I've

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worked with people who have had neck issues, and then they tied it towards wearing flip-flops.

So, for some people, that might sound kind of strange. And then for others of you, you're like, oh yeah, that makes a lot of sense. And I'll explain why now, because when I look at people and their gait pattern, I simplify the key factors that can make a difference to gait. And now someone who's listening to this, if you have a PhD in gait, you're going to be like, oh my God, Susi is dumbing this down way, way too much.

But what I've seen when I've really focused on these key things, so much has changed, whether it's about flip-flop wearing, sexy boot wearing, running, walking, hiking, really anything to do with gait. So I'm going to stand by my basics here. And if any of you are really smart when it comes to gait patterns and you care to have a discussion/argument with me, please send me an email, I'm happy to receive it, at [health@functionalsynergy.com](mailto:health@functionalsynergy.com).

But with that said, here are my basics. The first one is to understand that the platform of your gait pattern comes from the pelvis. That pelvis needs to be stable. And then how that leg bone swings in that pelvis, so the ability for that leg bone to swing, which requires both mobility and stability of the femur in the socket, how that leg bone swings in the pelvis is also paramount because that's going to dictate on some level how that foot places on the ground.

And then if I go up just a bit to the way that the pelvis and the rib cage interact, the ability for that pelvis to rib cage rotation, like that rotation ability is really, really vital too. So when we focus in on the ability to have good connection between the ribs and pelvis through good rotation, great stability at the pelvis, good stability and mobility between the leg bone and the pelvis, because that impacts the way that foot lands on the ground.

When I can cover off those things for certain, people's ability to walk, whatever they're wearing and whatever incline or down whatever incline makes a huge difference. Now, I've spoken about gait patterns on various

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other episodes, and I'll link some of those in the show notes so you can go back and harken in on those if you'd like to listen to them.

You might be wondering, well, Susi, why aren't you talking about the shoulder girdle? I do address the shoulder girdle, but as I mentioned a moment ago, these are the key, key areas here. When it can clean up these areas, so much can change for somebody, especially when it comes to wearing flip-flops. Because as I mentioned a few moments ago, a big piece about wearing flip-flops is that toe clenching, scrunching, toe curling and that increase of plantar pressure and a shorter stride length.

So that's clearly coming from the foot. But if we can still improve what's going on further above, that can sometimes mitigate that toe clenching, scrunching, curling, no ankle support, shorter stride length, peak plantar pressure. So just to keep that in mind when you're thinking about your feet and the impact of your flip-flops on the way your feet are functioning and how your feet are functioning relative to your pelvis, your spine, your rib cage and also that hip joint. When you clear those things up, so much can change.

I will add, and there are a couple of things that I found around people's hacks on flip-flops. So some people found that when the thong part of the flop that goes between your big toe and your second toe, if it's too long the amount of clenching increases. So some people had a hack of cutting down the thong and then crazy gluing that to the flip-flop.

I have never known anyone to do that, this is just something that I found very cool on the internet. If that's something, you really love your flip-flops but that thong level is too high, that may be contributing to too much clenching of those toes in the forefoot.

Another piece that I found is the flip-flop that you purchase. Sometimes the really, really inexpensive ones can be more problematic. And just the same way the really expensive ones can also be problematic. So to find the flip-flop that actually can work with your foot can make a big difference. So you kind of have to hunt around for that a little bit.

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And even having said that, when you start to improve your mechanics overall between your foot, your ankle, your calf, up through to your pelvis, and to your ribcage, you might even surprise yourself with the duration or the endurance that you have with wearing your flip-flops.

And it's so funny because even as I'm saying this, I'm thinking about the people who are really into feet and who are podiatrists and who have positions that are similar to podiatry, you're probably shaking your head thinking, Susi, why are you even saying any of this? They shouldn't be wearing flip-flops. And I'm like, I know, you can email me. I know. And the reality is, there are people out there who will wear them. And so I want to support you in wearing them and support you in your tissue.

So a couple of things to consider. If you remember in the last episode I walked you through some toe pulling and just gently moving the toes around, the big toe all the way down to the pinky toe. And it becomes really interesting because if you do this after wearing your flip-flops, and even before wearing your flip-flops and comparing them, or comparing over the course of a week if you're wearing the flip-flops quite a bit you'll probably notice a difference in the quality of the tissue that you feel as you're pulling gently and massaging through the toes as well as the forefoot.

And I guided you in to feel between the metatarsals of your feet. And sometimes that can be surprising to people at how tight or limited they are, but it makes sense, right? If your toes and the tissue in and around the toes in the forefoot are what's holding your foot into the flip flop, then they're going to get a lot of work and possibly overwork.

So if you can get your fingers in there and massage and get a sense of what the tissue feels like, you'll really tune in to your feedback mechanisms and tune in a lot sooner to when you might need to massage your feet out and just work that foot out a little bit.

If you come into your calf now, so if you're sitting down right now and you place your ankle, your right ankle, onto your left knee and you find where your ankle bone is and watch up the seam of your, if you're wearing pants

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the seam of your pant leg, or imagining where that seam would be. It's right about where you'll feel the bone on that inside part of your shin. And if you gently put pressure in your calf and kind of press your thumb up towards that bone, be gentle with this you might surprise yourself at how tight that feels or how tense that feels.

And just walk your thumb from the ankle bone up the inside of that shin towards the knee. And just get a sense of where some of that sensation of tension and tightness and even maybe where you've got more suppleness, where that sits. And just spend some time. Be gentle with it, you don't need to break your thumb or put a whole bunch of white knuckled pressure or pressing so hard that your thumb goes white. You just need to be really, really gentle.

Think about if you have to help a little girl with tangles in her hair and you're unwinding those tangles. Or if you've got a piece of jewelry that's got tangled, like it's all tangled up, you don't reef on the jewelry, but rather go gently into the area. And gently, gently, gently work with that calf. And then you can do the same thing on the other side, of course.

And then bring your hand back down to your foot and feel again in between those metatarsals, so in that forefoot. On the top side, the dorsal side, as well as on the plantar foot side. And just notice how each of those feel and then come into the toes again and feel if there's any difference having just worked with the inside of that calf.

Now, interestingly enough, the position that I've asked you to come into is ankle to knee. So now you're in a place where you could maybe move your upper body into a little bit of a forward movement. So if you're sitting straight up and then make sure that it's coming from the hip, you're not slumping around through your spine. But with one ankle to the opposite knee, gently lean forward and you might feel a little bit of stretch in through the outer hip.

And only go as far as you're feeling yourself breathe very, very easily, that your jaw is not increasing in tension. There's no strain or pain or tension or



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even tingling around the SI or the lower back. It's all mostly in that outer hip. And easily, easily, easily breathe. So if you find that your breath has become held or a bit ratchety, then just bring yourself back up and find the range that really is soft and easy.

A lot of people tend to go to where their range actually is, but not a range where there isn't tension. And in my mind tension, the way I'm describing it, is different than, say, a stretch sensation. So tension is your breath is a little bit more held, your jaw is a bit tight, the tension, you're kind of wondering, am I going a bit too far? Well, I've got the range of motion, but this doesn't really feel that good. But I don't know, maybe I should just go further.

If you're having that sort of dialogue, you're going too far is a way to consider it. Because it's so easy to kind of go, well, I've got the range of motion, I'm just going to go. But if you're not moving well in the range that you're moving in, then you're not really supporting yourself. So in this case, more is not better, moving well is better.

So find the range, even if it's much, much, much smaller, find the range where you're really breathing quite easily even if you're not getting a stretch. Because a stretch is not really an indication that you're doing anything properly. It's also not an indication you're doing anything improperly. It's simply a sensation.

The key is noticing your breath, noticing what you're feeling, and noticing that you're not slumping through your ribs and that you're moving through those hips specifically. And then when you finish that, bring the ankle back down to the floor or the foot back down to the floor. And now notice what you're feeling through your foot, your toes, your heel, up through your calf.

And before you switch to your other side, come up to standing and have a walk around. And just notice if there's anything distinct between either side, the side you just worked on and the side you're about to work on. Notice if there's anything different up into your breath, maybe even into your jaw or your neck quite possibly. And then when you're ready, come on back and then repeat that to the other side.

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So what the process was that I was suggesting is you just come into your toes and you're gently pulling, gently, gently pulling and feeling the tissue of the toes. And then coming into the forefoot and feeling between the metatarsals, both on the top side, the dorsal side, as well as the bottom side, the plantar side. And you're just moving them around and massage and in between those metatarsals.

And then with the ankle to the knee, you're following up what would be the seam of your pants from that inner ankle bone up towards the knee and just letting your thumbs or your fingers gently apply some pressure toward that bone on that inner side of your calf.

And it can be really interesting, when we don't have a lot of ankle stability or when we're wearing flip-flops, we can not only utilize the tissue that is very intrinsic and local to the foot, but also around the calf because a lot of the muscles around the calf also attach onto the foot. So if you're scrunching up on your foot, you're going to be impacting the tissue on the calf.

And then after you spend some time, and you can be as luxurious with your time here as you want as you start to explore more and more of the impact between your calf and your foot. When you're done with that, then start to come back to the bottom of your foot, back to your toes. And then notice both dorsal and plantar sides of your foot, how the toes are feeling.

And then again, once you're done with that, and I know I'm walking you through this a little bit quickly and I really encourage you to spend the time that you specifically need, have a walk around and just notice how this feels.

And if some of this is resonating, then I do encourage you to go to the show notes and find the YouTube links there and we'll guide you through some more practices that can impact your feet and then see how that feels when you then slide your feet back into those flip-flops. Because I'm all about really enjoying what you got and supporting your body to enjoy those flip-flops that you have.

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And if you might need to shift up the actual type of flip-flop that you have, then go and do that. But let's start working with your tissue first because if you can shift your tissue, you can shift so much. So here is to happy flip-flop wearing. Do join me on my next episode when I talk about barefoot, because walking barefoot can be just as luxurious and awesome but also has its drawbacks too. We'll talk all about that.

If you have resonated with what I'm saying and you want to dig in more and you want my help to support you in really helping your feet, then join me, Power of Pure Movement: Strong and Supple Feet. You can learn more at [learn.functionalsynergy.com/feet](http://learn.functionalsynergy.com/feet). I would love, love, love to work with you.