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My Wide-Leg Pants Nearly Killed Me, but I Keep Wearing Them Anyway

Why do we do this to ourselves?



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he other day I was walking up my stairs when my right foot got caught on the left hem of my wide-leg pants. I tripped and fell, then slid down to

The bottom of the staircase. My entire leg turned black and blue and my hip, shoulder, and neck were instantly thrown out of alignment. Worst of all, perhaps, was the shock of falling so hard and fast and not being able to stop myself. It was bad, but the injury could have been worse.

For many wide-leg pant wearers, it is. Fashion influencers from all over the world have recently taken to social media to post about their wide-leg pant mishaps. They're calling the pants "death traps" and sharing photos of their fractured knees, bloody elbows, and stitched-up faces.

The fact that people are tripping on them comes as no surprise to Shobhit Minhas, M.D., a board-certified orthopedic hand and upper extremity surgeon at Fox Valley Orthopedics in Geneva, IL. He says that wide-leg pants can be dangerous, especially when walking up stairs.

"Excess fabric around the ankle and foot interferes with proprioception, which is your brain's sense of where your foot is in space," Dr. Minhas says. "On stairs, your foot needs a clear, predictable path to find each step edge."

He says that loose fabric, like the kind in wide-leg pants, can catch on a heel, a stair nose, or your own trailing foot, turning a routine step into a sudden fall. "Because the trip happens without warning, you often brace yourself and can break your wrist or hand, which is what I often see as an orthopedic hand surgeon."

In fact, Dr. Minhas sees several kinds of injuries from trip-and-fall accidents. **The most common injury he sees is the common distal radius, or wrist, fracture that results from someone bracing themselves during a fall.** He also sees scaphoid fractures (a different kind of wrist fracture), elbow fractures or dislocations, and shoulder dislocations. On stairs, specifically, the added momentum and hard edges increase the likelihood of a fracture rather than just bruising.

That doesn't mean that all wide-leg pants need to immediately go into the bin. "Fashion and safety don't have to be at odds; it just comes down to fit and awareness," Dr. Minhas says. "If you love wide-leg pants, you just have to be more vigilant of your surroundings or maybe not wear those in certain situations where there is an elevated risk to fall." And if you do, it might be wise to hike up the hems when you're going up or down stairs, like you would with a long skirt.

So why do so many people, including me, wear wide-leg pants even when we know the risks? (I succumbed to wearing them even after my fall!) I find them especially versatile and comfortable for my casual mom-

on-the-go lifestyle. They're also known for being forgiving yet polished, and cooling yet sleek.

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But these aren't the only reasons people like them. According to [Samantha Brown](#), a mom and celebrity wardrobe stylist based in New York City and Miami, wide-leg pants are also flattering on many different body types, particularly when the entire proportion of the outfit is considered.

“Wide-leg pants accentuate the waistline by adding volume to the lower half of the body,” says Brown, author of the best-selling book *Dressing Up*. “When paired with heels, wedges, or pointed-toe shoes, they also help to elongate the legs.”

For die-hard wide-leg pants-wearers, Brown shares some advice for how to wear them well. “A styling tip is to make sure a waistline is defined,” she says. “If pairing with an oversized top or jacket, tuck in the shirt and add a belt. This helps to keep the volume from overwhelming the frame.”

While Brown isn't aware that any of her clients have tripped on their wide-leg pants, she has heard of their reputation.

The good news is there are ways to help make wide-leg pants safer. Brown explains, "Generally speaking, **I'd recommend hemming pants to 1/8 inch off the floor to keep them long, but not too long.** I know that extreme lengths are trending, but some trends are just impractical. Not worth the risk!"

For those looking for trendy, flattering, and safer alternatives, there are options. These include balloon pants and culottes. "There are so many great silhouettes at the moment," Brown says.

"I know that extreme lengths are trending, but some trends are just impractical."

She encourages people to wear clothes that feel authentic to their personal style and clothes that complement their body type. Brown also suggests testing for safety before making any purchases. "Test run the pants in a store or fitting room by moving and walking to make sure you're not at risk," she says.

As for me, my bruises have healed, and my neck and shoulder are feeling better. Do I have the guts to try balloon pants or barrel pants? No, probably not. They don't feel authentic to me. And I won't be squeezing myself back into my skinny jeans either. So I'm back in my wide-leg pants, only this time I'm approaching the stairs with extra caution.

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