

## **A flip flop by any name, shape or style is an accident waiting to happen**

*by Chris Carlson PT, MPT*

Spring is finally here! After a long winter, we love to finally open the windows, put away the coats and air out the house. There also are a lot of people who wear different footwear once the warmer weather arrives. Snow boots are put away and their gym shoes come out of hibernation. However, people also bring out their flip flops. Flip flops are a physical therapist's nightmare.



I'm not referring to a structured sandal. A sandal with a supportive arch and multiple anchor points around the foot to keep the sandal securely on the foot works just fine. What I am referring to is the flip flop. It is basically a sole with small piece of rubber, leather, or plastic that runs between the big and second toes and across the forefoot to attempt to hold the sole in place. With most flip flops, you have to curl your toes to keep it on when you step and it is very easy to lose and fall off especially, if one attempts to run.

As you can see in the picture above, a typical flip flop is simply little more than a foam pad with rubber straps to hold the foot in place and often lacks arch support. And, despite the strap, the foot may not land on the pad correctly causing a possible fall or injury.

Without proper ankle and foot support, the ankle and foot are much more susceptible to injuries like sprains and strains. It is not uncommon for the foot to slide off the pad and to roll the ankle resulting in a painful ligamentous sprain or muscle strain. Another concern is developing plantar fasciitis or posterior tibial tendonitis. Additionally, prolonged walking and repetitively curling the toes to help keep the flip flop in place may result in fatigue of the very small, intrinsic foot muscles. With the open style of the flip flop, the foot also is more susceptible to toe and foot injuries such as lacerations and fractures from accidentally kicking something or from a heavy object falling on the unprotected foot.

Bottom line, save yourself a lot of trouble and leave this type of footwear for pools and showers rather than all-day footwear!