

The recent report on how 'skinny jeans' can lead to 'compartment syndrome' is unusual and of course we don't know the other factors that may have contributed to this case. In reality, superficial nerve compression, mild circulatory occlusion, impedance of digestinal flow and skin irritation are far more likely symptoms. Skinny jeans or just tight fitting jeans worn for prolonged periods which are not designed to change circumference can lead to real health risks which many people might not realise and shrug off as unimportant.

Surface compression to superficial nerves in the legs may result in feelings of tingling and numbness, In the short term this is not ideal but unlikely to cause lasting symptoms, its only when this occurs on a regular basis that you are potentially putting yourself at increased risk of nerve damage and should, therefore be avoided. Tight clothing, particularly around the thighs and calfs can occlude the circulation, creating irregularities in the flow of blood and an increasing the risk of developing thrombosis. In a healthy individual this is unlikely but combined with others factors such as a long haul flight, a pre existing medical condition such as diabetes, recent lower limb surgery or pregnancy the risk can be significantly increased. Tight fitting clothing is also thought to interrupt or impede normal stomach function resulting in stomach pain, reflux and even constipation, all of which resolve quickly following cessation of wearing tight fitting clothing. Lastly but still equally important are the cascade of skin irritations that can occur causing discomfort, pain and disability if they remain unchecked.

Other clothing which is less apparent but is known to cause similar problems are neck ties, which has been shown to have an association with the development of eye pathology. It's a similar mechanism to the compression effect above, however in this case, its related to compression occurring around the neck leading to greater intraocular pressure in the eyes. In reality, it is probably a combination of a tight collar on a shirt that's been washed many times, a neck tie and the diurnal changes to body musculature and tone, either way, its a real risk and one that many are not aware of.

So the key message is this, if you are going to wear the latest fashion

hugging python strangling clothing, listen to your body, if you start to feel tingling and numbness, develop pains in your calves or stomach or notice irritation on your skin, stop wearing them and seek attention from your GP! If you like to wear a neck tie, leave the knot slightly looser, you will still look smart and be able to see this in the mirror for many more years to come.