Why Flip Flops are a Bad Idea

OSHA, the National Safety Council and most insurance companies continuously research on how to control slip and fall injuries. All of these organizations suggest a “sensible” footwear that is appropriate for the workplace. Yet many employers choose to ignore the “sensible” footwear suggestion. They don’t want to infringe upon the choices of employees, but they are responsible for the costs associated with slips, trips and falls in the workplace.

Flip-flops are designed for easy on and off situations. On the beach, by the pool, showering at the gym, taking out the garbage, making a quick run to the Laundromat – all these are examples in which the advantages of lightweight footwear are self-evident. Wearing them all day, however, may affect your health and safety.

They contribute to slips, trips and falls in several ways:
1. Many do not have toe spring. Footwear should have a built-in clearance between the floor and the sole of the toe area. This clearance helps avoid trips.
2. Flip-flops are loose fitting and your feet move around on top of them. Poor fitting and loose footwear contribute to trips. During an abrupt stop or turn your body and feet will turn, leaving the shoe implanted on the floor. This can cause you to “trip over your own feet”.
3. The smooth soles contribute to slips on wet and contaminated surfaces. Slips occur when traction changes and you go from one traction level to another, such as from pavement to an icy patch. The danger comes when we do not see the transition from one traction level to the next. For example, when walking across a floor we do not see a wet spot and our stride stays the same; the traction level decreases and our foot slides across the wet spot. This is much more likely to occur with a smooth sole.
4. According to the American Podiatric Medical Association (APMA), unlike sturdy shoes, flip-flops aren't good for extensive walking because:
   - No arch support (arch can’t flex normally)
   - Lack of heel cushioning
   - Lack of shock absorption (knees and hips absorb more impact)
   - Weakens butt and hamstring muscles
   - Contributes to spread of germs

Wearers can suffer foot pain due to lack of arch support and tendinitis. So while we think of them as comfortable to wear, they are hurting our feet in the long run.