

## SHORT LEG CAUSES PAIN

**Question:** I went to a chiropractor and he told me I have a short leg. Don't most people have one leg shorter? Could this be causing my hip pain?

**Answer:** A short leg absolutely can cause hip pain. And yes, having one leg shorter than the other is very common. However, common does not mean that it is normal.

It is thought that at least 50% of the population have a short leg. Many people aren't even aware that they have what is called leg length inequality. There are some clues including pants that don't fit evenly or skirts that may twist off-center as you wear them. You may have one shoe that wears out faster than the other. Pain on one side of the body is a good warning sign. When only one knee hurts or you have hip degeneration on one side, chiropractors often suspect a short leg.

There are no rules as to which side of your body may hurt, but there are tendencies. If you stand all day at work, you will tend to list to the short leg. This may put additional pressure on the knee or hip on your short leg. If you walk most of your day, you will tend to develop more pain on the long leg side. There is added stress to the hip joint with walking. A short leg of 5mm. (about 1/4 inch) can cause back, hip and leg pain. If the shortness approaches 1/2 inch, you're at more risk for degeneration of joints, especially hip and knee.

What causes a short leg? Differences in leg length can be either structural or functional in nature. Structural short legs are due to the leg bones - either tibia, femur or both - being actually shorter. This may be due to unequal growth rates, trauma, fractures, surgery, infections or bone tumors. A functional short leg is due to a postural imbalance in the body. A common cause of functional short leg is excess foot pronation, where the foot rolls inward, drops the arch and produces an apparent short leg. This may best be corrected with foot orthotics. Misalignment in your sacroiliac joints and spine also cause a functional shortening.

We take x-rays of you standing upright in your bare feet. We then measure the tops of your hips to determine if one leg is shorter than the other. We also evaluate your feet for possible foot pronation as well as any other deformity in your lower limbs.

Our first treatment includes manipulation to low back and sacroiliac region to balance your pelvis. Our goal is to bring your body back into compensation for the short leg. For many people, this is sufficient and your body successfully adapts to the short leg. People that exercise regularly and have good muscle tone are candidates for manipulation only.

Many of our patients require heel lifts placed inside the shoe. This can be very helpful for chronic low back pain or pain in the hip, knee or ankle. If need be, a lift can be combined with foot orthotics to correct both short leg and excess rolling inward of the foot.

If you suspect or know that you have a short leg, a doctor of chiropractic can evaluate and treat this condition.

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