

My Back Hurts When Standing

Question: My low back hurts when I stand for even short periods of time. It seems to go away when I walk or sit down. What could cause that?

Answer: There are several structures in your spine that can cause pain. This includes muscles, discs, nerves, spinal cord and facet joints. Facet joints are small joints in your spine that guide and limit how you move. These small joints are not designed to have a lot of pressure. When you put pressure on these joints, it can cause back pain.

A common cause of low back pain with standing is foot pronation. Foot pronation is when your feet roll inward. It is commonly called flat feet, but you may have a normal arch and still have foot pronation. In fact, your feet may not hurt at all! The foot simply rolls inward too far, which then twists your leg inward and rotates your pelvis forward. This results in too much curve in your low back, causing your low back to arch too much. This in turn jams the facet joints and causes low back pain.

You can see if different shoes make a difference in your back pain when you stand. Any type of high heel can cause more curve in the low back and create back pain. My suggestion is to try a good athletic shoe that has good support and see if this makes a difference. If it does, you may be having foot pronation that contributes to your low back pain.

In some cases, orthotics or shoe inserts are needed to relieve the pressure on your low back. This may be as easy as a generic arch support from a pharmacy or sporting goods store. Or it may be more involved, requiring a custom-made orthotic for your foot. I personally wear custom-made orthotics since I stand all day for my job as a chiropractor. This keeps me pain-free. If I don't wear these, my low back gets tight rather quickly and I must stretch it out by touching my toes.

There are many health professionals that understand the relationship of the feet to low back pain. This includes chiropractors, physical therapists, podiatrists and orthopedic doctors. If you suspect you have this type of problem, consult the doctor or specialist you trust.

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