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"treating the cause of your problem, not just the symptoms"

All Feet Are Not Created Equal

Did you know that there are 52 bones, 36 joints, and lots of ligaments in your feet? Why is this significant? Well, your feet are the foundation of your entire body. They must withstand pressures every day of two to three times your body weight as you move. Just like the concrete foundation of your house, it has to hold the weight of the entire house. If the foundation begins to shift or can no longer hold the weight, the house begins to show physical changes or signs of “settling” all the way up to the roof. The same scenario occurs in your feet. If the ligaments become “stretched” or the joints become “rigid or stiff”, the foot can no longer hold the daily forces that are applied to them. Over time, this leads to the breakdown (arthritis) of the joints of the feet, microscopic tearing of the ligaments (plantar fasciitis), and fatigue of the foot muscles. People who are experiencing these problems find it difficult to stand or walk for even short periods of time. But this is not the end of their problems. When the feet are settling or changing structurally (most commonly seen as “fallen or flattened arches”), other areas of the body can be dramatically affected. Changes in the feet often cause pain in the knees and shins. Particularly if one foot changes more than the other, pain can also show up in the hips, pelvis, and low back. In dramatic cases, changes in the feet can lead to postural alterations in the spine that can cause problems up as high as the neck, usually showing up as neck stiffness and muscle tension headaches.

In my office I recently came across a patient that appeared to have simple mechanical low back pain. With Chiropractic treatment, he demonstrated great improvement in mobility and the pain disappeared. But within three weeks, the pain in the low back began to creep back. This happen a couple times before I decided to look for other possible causes. I asked him about his feet. When he removed his shoes and socks, the left foot had a dramatically fallen or flattened arch. When he stood and I looked from behind, the left fallen arch made his left hip, pelvis, and lower back drop slightly. Not to my surprise, this was the same side of the low back that always became sore. It was then apparent that to correct the mechanics of his feet, he needed “custom orthotics”. To do this, I produced a “foam cast” of his foot while it was in a neutral, non-weight-bearing position. In simple terms, this means that I made a foam cast of his foot while he was sitting down so that the arch and joints of the foot were in their proper position and not flattened. Plastic orthotics or shoe inserts were then made to specifically fit his feet that would give them the support they needed. As long as he wore the orthotics, the arches of

the feet were maintained in their proper position and the postural changes in his low back were eliminated. As I expected, the pain in his low back was also eliminated.

Custom orthotics are not cheap to have made. However, almost all extended health plans have coverage for them up to three or four hundred dollars. One must also be sure that the actual orthotic is being made properly. Be sure the imprint of the foot is not made while the person is standing. It has to be a “non-weight bearing cast or imprint” or it is unlikely that your insurance company will pay for it. If you have any further questions, feel free to contact me directly.