Limb Length Differences

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What is it?

A limb length discrepancy is a condition in which one leg is longer than the other. Some people have this condition and are completely unaware of it, while others experience a great deal of pain and discomfort. This condition can alter the way you walk, can affect weight distribution during gait, and can in some cases, cause knee, hip and especially back problems. It is normal to have slight variations in the length of the lower limbs. However, in certain cases, this variation can and will produce clinical symptoms. Foot specialists deal with and treat limb length discrepancies on a regular basis and are specialized in this area of dysfunction.

What causes it?

Limb length discrepancy may be caused by a number of factors. Developmental alterations in the womb can affect how the legs are formed. Persistent resting and sleeping positions of the growing child can result in limb length variations. Trauma can also cause a difference in the length of one's legs. If a bone breaks in the lower leg, this may be enough to stop the growth of normal bone and cause a limb length discrepancy. Hereditary factors may also lead to this deformity. If limb length discrepancies run in the family, this may also increase one's risk of developing this condition.

How is it treated?

Limb length discrepancies can be treated by a number of methods. If the dysfunction does not cause any pain or symptoms, it may go untreated. If it is thought that a persistent limb length discrepancy might in the future cause a problem then it should be treated. If this dysfunction causes pain, discomfort, or difficulties with ambulation, the condition should be treated.. For proper diagnosis we recommend standing x-rays where measurements are the most accurate. After the diagnosis has been confirmed then special

orthotics and/or shoe modifications may be made. The **orthotics** may consist of a simple heel lift or may be customized to the patient's foot. These modifications should help to effectively treat the deformity as well as to decrease the compensatory discomfort.