The Truth about Bunions

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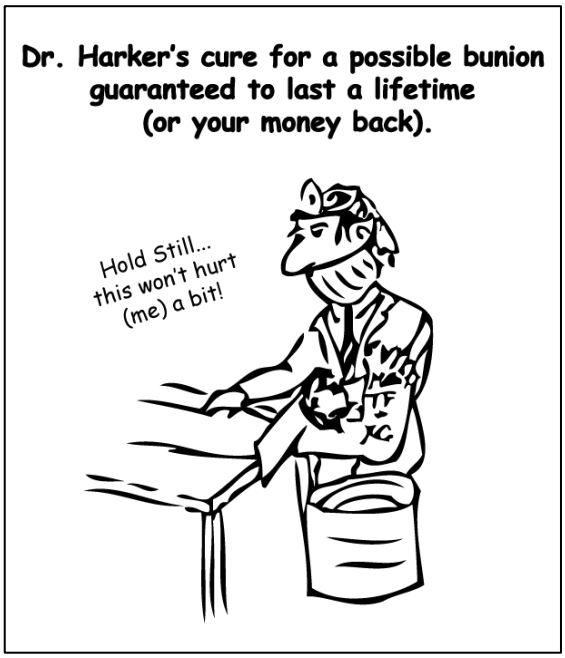

A couple of months ago, I worked with a client who was told by her doctor that she had a bunion on her right foot, and that her only option for treatment, if the pain became unbearable, was surgery. As expected, I quickly discovered that the site of her pain was not the source of her pain. All it took for me to figure this out was a quick glance at her standing posture. Her body was almost 65% shifted to the right side of center. I could easily see that she was bearing a substantial amount of weight on her right foot compared to the left.

WebMD states, "Bunions may be caused by foot mechanics that result in too much pressure on the big toe joint. An abnormal foot motion called excessive pronation, having certain foot shapes such as flatfoot, and wearing shoes that squeeze the toes together or shift weight to the toes (such as high-heeled shoes) may all contribute to the pressure. Over time, the constant pressure forces the big toe out of alignment, gradually bending it toward the other toes."

So, if faulty foot mechanics and excessive pressure on one joint of the body are the root cause of bunion pain, then these problems should be the focus of the treatment. Keep in mind that the position and function of the foot is reliant on the mechanics of the knee and the hip and the shoulder. If any of these other joints are dysfunctional, the mechanics of the foot will be affected.

For my client, the pressure problem in the foot was stemming from the imbalance in weight bearing of the right side versus the left. In order to keep the body upright, her muscles had twisted and pulled the bones of the foot into a position that helped to stabilize the extra weight on the right side, but this compensation resulted in pain and deformity in the toe joint. Joint position changes due to weakness, inactivity, previous injury and a variety of other factors. When this occurs, then the body's ability to bear weight, stand, and move under the force of gravity is compromised.

In order to address the unbalanced weight bearing problem, my client began a daily routine of movements and exercises specifically targeted to "wake-up" and re-establish proper muscle function on the left side of her body. Within two weeks, her weight bearing became more balanced, 50/50, between the right and left sides of her body AND the right foot stopped hurting! The size of the bunion will also diminish over time, as the body is able to bear weight more evenly across the joints, just like it was designed to do.

Would surgery have helped? Surgery might have addressed the changes in the foot temporarily, but it would not have addressed the root cause of the problem. Over time, the bunion would come back, as the body continued to lean more heavily towards the right side, and one surgery would lead to the next, and the next.

The treatment plan for bunions, and other structural problems, must include proper analysis and treatment of the biomechanics and joint position from the head to toe. Look deeply at your own body. Are the right muscles doing the right job? If the muscles are not functioning properly, then resulting compensations will pull the joint out of position and cause any of the following symptoms: repetitive muscle strains, arthritis, tendonitis, joint degeneration and more. Be sure to look farther up or down the body when dealing with a joint problem. Compare the right side to the left, and ascertain whether the body is moving how it was originally designed to move. By taking a few minutes to look in the mirror, or feel the weight in your feet, you may be able to avoid needless surgeries for problems that are actually just a result of improper joint position or biomechanics.