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What is the difference between pseudoclaudication and claudication?

Answer From Randy A. Shelerud, M.D.

Pseudoclaudication and claudication cause similar symptoms — leg pain — but for different reasons.

Pseudoclaudication can be a symptom of lumbar spinal stenosis, a condition that occurs when the spinal canal narrows in your lower back. This narrowing can be caused by bulging disks, bone spurs or a thickening of the supportive ligaments in the back of the spinal canal.

The nerve roots that control movement and sensation in your legs pass through these narrow areas in your spinal canal. If these areas become too narrow, they can put pressure on the nerve roots. Pseudoclaudication pain is made worse by standing or walking, and is usually relieved by sitting or lying down.

The pain associated with claudication occurs for an entirely different reason. Claudication is caused by peripheral artery disease, a circulation problem that decreases blood flow to leg muscles.

The reduced amount of fuel and oxygen can cause muscle pain, especially during exercise. Vascular claudication causes pain when the muscles are in use and is relieved when the muscles are allowed to rest. So, someone with claudication will have leg symptoms with walking but not when standing.

With

Randy A. Shelerud, M.D.

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