

HEALTH

**STAND UP FOR YOURSELF –
PROTECT YOUR FEET ON THE JOB**



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More than 60 percent of our patients have occupations that require standing for long periods. If you don't stand at work, I'm sure you know plenty of people who do and are familiar with their health complaints – sore and swollen feet and legs, tired muscles, low back pain and achy necks and shoulders, among many others.

The feet, legs, back and neck hold the body in an upright position and suffer the most when one stands on the job. The feet are particularly vulnerable; swelling, achiness, calluses, bunions, corns, fallen arches (flat

feet), pain in the arches (a symptom of plantar fasciitis), varicose veins, sprains and athlete's foot are common. Work stations designed to ease the effects of standing are great, but not used everywhere: just ask a retail salesperson, security guard or factory worker.

What can workers do to alleviate some of the foot problems and injuries common in occupations that require standing? We (I include myself – doctors stand a lot) can all try to protect our feet and legs with the proper shoes and hosiery.

- Shoes have to fit well from the moment you try them on. Shop in the late afternoon or evening when feet are at their maximum size.
- Make sure you can wiggle your toes and that the shoe grips your heel firmly. The shoe should support your arch.
- Wear insoles, or orthot-

ics, to put your foot in a "neutral" position and support the arch. Workers with pathologies (flat feet, hammer toes, bunions, etc.) should see a podiatrist to obtain custom-made orthotics.

- Wear one pair of shoes for commuting and another for work if possible.
- Determine if you need rubber soles, hard boots, steel-tipped shoes or another special shoe that protects feet in particular working conditions.
- Wear support hose, which may help with swelling. Men should too (support socks are widely available). Change hosiery daily.

Wearing appropriate shoes and hosiery won't make up for a hazardous workplace, but you'll reduce some of the most common foot problems associated with standing on the job.

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