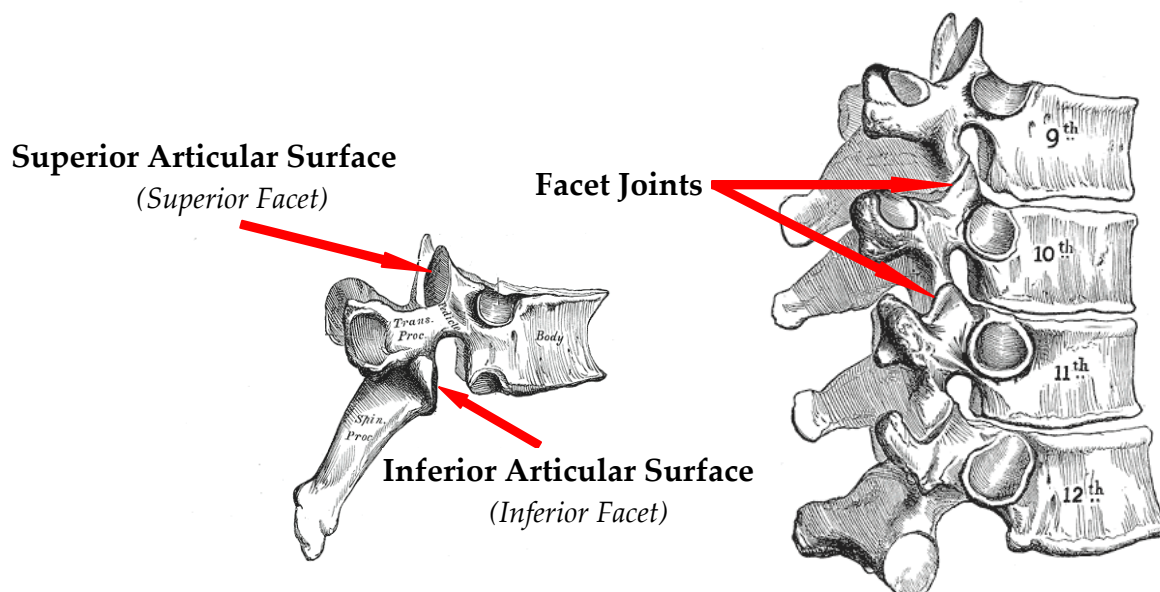


Facet Syndrome

The joints between the spinal bones are inflamed.

This is an *inflammation of the tissues of the facet joints* of the spine. Figure 1 below shows the facet joints. The problem mostly occurs in the lumbar spine, so pain is felt in the lower back. The pain is relieved in the sitting position, aggravated by the standing position, further aggravated by leaning backwards whilst standing, but relieved by bending forwards whilst standing.

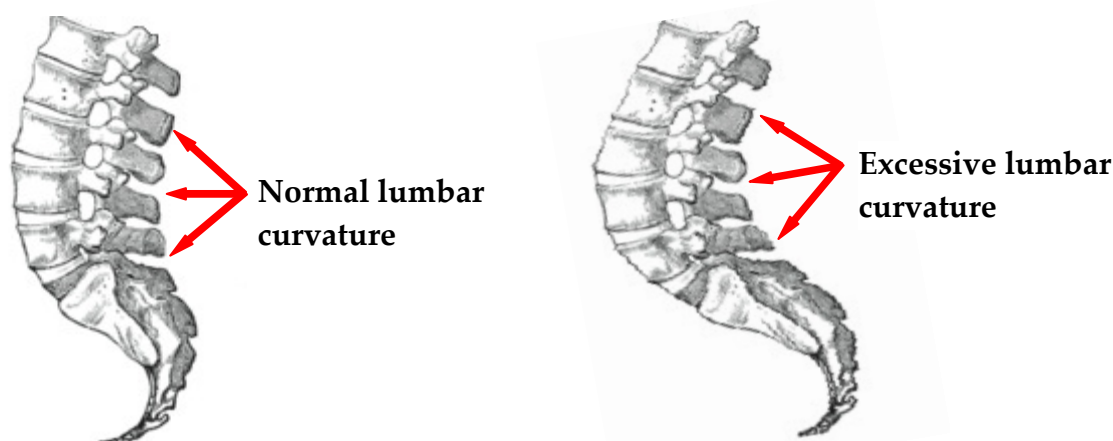
Figure 1: Illustration of the Facet Joints of the Spine



(a) Causes of Facet Syndrome

Facet syndrome is caused by anything which exaggerates the curvature of the lumbar spine. The facet joints are then forced to bear weight, a function for which they are not designed. They become inflamed. An illustration of normal and excessive lumbar curvature (lordosis) is provided in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Normal and Excessive Lumbar Curvature (Lordosis)

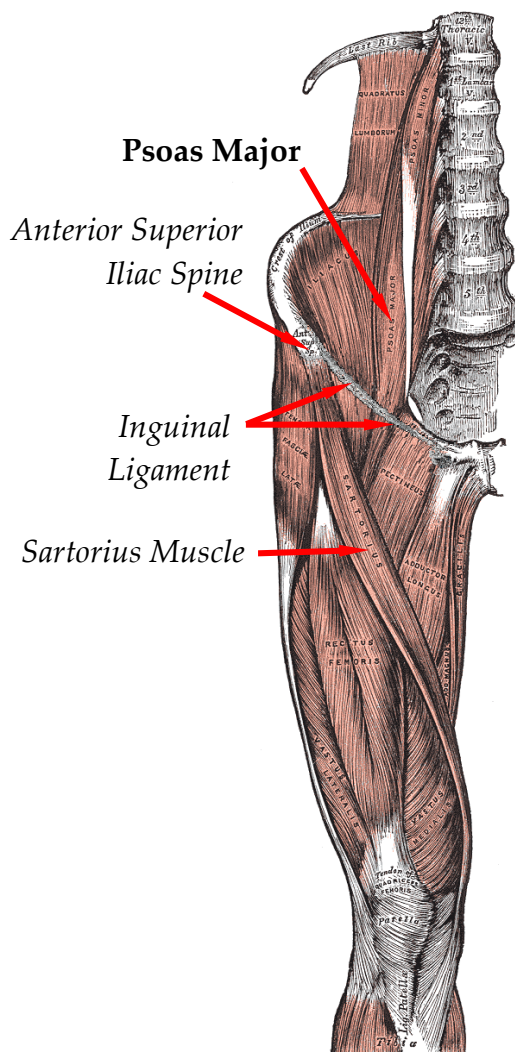


(b) Factors Which Contribute to Increasing Lumbar Spinal Curvature

The key causes of increased and therefore excessive *lumbar lordosis* are:

1. "Big Belly", which is usually due to either *obesity* or *pregnancy*. In both these cases the belly moves the centre of gravity of the body *forwards*, and the bottom is thrust *backwards* to compensate, forcing the arch of the lower back to increase.
2. High heels worn too often. This forces the wearer to lean the upper body backwards so they do not topple forwards, thus increasing the arch of the lower back.
3. Tight and often short *psaos major* muscle. This drags the lumbar spine forwards, causing the curvature to be exaggerated. Figure 3 below shows the muscle *psaos major*. You can see in the picture that it has attachments to each and every lumbar vertebra.

Figure 3: Illustration of Psoas Major



If either point 1 or 2 (or both) above are present, *psaos major* will eventually become tight and short even if it were not so to begin with, because muscles, including *psaos*, adjust to suit *function*.

In this case, faulty posture caused by big belly or high-heels leads to the shortening of *psaos*.

(c) Treatment

If not corrected, the chronic inflammation caused by the pressure will lead to degeneration of the facet joints. The inflammation may also extend into nearby tissues such as the spinal discs, ultimately contributing to their degeneration.

Your practitioner will treat the *psaos* muscle if necessary and discuss your options for resolving the problem and preventing recurrence.

Your practitioner will decide whether or not you need education about posture, exercises to improve it, and/or a stretch to lengthen *psaos major*.