



SCIATICA

SUPPORTS

LOCAL CHARITIES

What is Sciatica?



Sciatica is not a disease, but the name given to a sharp pain in the area of the sciatic nerve. On each side of the lower back, a series of nerves, branch off to different parts of the body. The largest, the sciatic nerve, runs down each leg. When back problems put pressure on this nerve, the result is pain in the lower back, buttocks, hip and back of the leg and possibly all the way down to the toes.

The sciatic nerve may become irritated when the inner part of the shock absorbing discs between the bones bulge out into the space where the nerve starts. This is called a protrusion and if it bulges out too much, disc prolapse or rupture could occur. This puts even more pressure on the spinal nerves, resulting in sciatica.

Sciatica has many other causes, including tight hamstrings, tight buttock muscles, joint and muscle problems in the spine or pelvis, different leg lengths and back sprain.

Who does it affect?

Men may experience sciatica more than women due to the fact that many men carry their wallets in their hip pocket, the exact spot where the sciatic nerve is located in the buttocks. Sitting on the wallet can cause pressure on the nerve, resulting in sciatic pain.

What are the Symptoms?

The pain may be a burning, sharp, tender, shooting, dull felling, 'pins and needles', or an electrical sensation and usually occurs on one side of the buttocks and / or leg.

How can it be prevented?

Prevent sciatica by avoiding sitting in one position for prolonged periods and follow a regular exercise programme that includes gentle stretching exercises, such as yoga. Men should eliminate unnecessary items in their wallets and **NOT** carry them in their hip pockets!

Practice good posture and check your sleeping position. Sleep on your back with a pillow under your knees or on your side with a pillow between your knees. Ensure that your pillow is the correct height – not too high or low, or too bulky.

Finally, prevent the problem from occurring in the first place by keeping to your maintenance Chiropractic appointments. Chiropractic treatment can keep your spine healthy and consciously remind you to promote your health. You can also do this by maintaining a healthy weight and incorporating deep breathing to reduce stress, which helps relax tense muscles. Have your shoes professionally fitted to avoid aggravation of back pain. Your Chiropractor can recommend furniture and other products that encourage back support.

We care about you

Treatment

Depending on the type and cause of your sciatica, the following self-help treatments may be used, but remember – **don't delay your treatment** – early arthritic changes can occur rapidly in injured joints!

1. Initially try bed rest. Use a firm mattress, lie on your unaffected side with your unaffected leg slightly bent, and your affected leg straight and supported by pillows.

2. Try applying ice packs for 15 minutes a few times each day. Do not apply ice directly on to the skin. Don't use heat as it can slow your recovery.

3. Exercise to loosen up! Lots of muscles will get tight – stretch the back, buttocks, hamstrings, buttock muscles and calf. Consider varying your training, and when the pain diminishes, try a gentle walk. However, if a specific exercise causes severe pain, avoid it!

4. Avoid long periods of sitting which can aggravate sciatica, and make sure your sitting posture is correct (especially at work and in the car) and use pillows if needed to adjust your back and buttocks into a more comfortable position. Avoid sitting on soft chairs and sofas.

5. Finally, if sciatica does not respond to self care within one week, consult your chiropractor for an examination, treatment and advice. Call sooner if numbness or pain increases or if the foot becomes weak.

By using gentle but specific adjustments, chiropractors are able to release the nerve and address the often underlying problem.

Contact your general practitioner immediately for any loss of bowel or bladder function.

Extra tips for sufferers

* When sciatic pain is caused by a bulging disc in the lower back, it is often made worse by bending, straining, coughing or sneezing. The lower part of the back feels stiff, loses its curve and the muscles along each side of the spine may go into painful spasm. So avoid coughing and sneezing in a bent position!

* Avoid continuous bed rest for a prolonged time which slows recovery.

* When standing for some time, place one foot higher than the other on a block to transfer your weight.

* When shopping, move purposefully to your destination – ambling is often more painful. Carry your shopping in two bags with the weight evenly distributed. Ladies, try to avoid carrying a bag on your shoulder!

Back pain can be difficult to diagnose and treat and may result in long term limitation of activity and lifestyle if treatment is delayed. Take responsibility and practise



200 lbs Pressure



150 lbs Pressure

The affects of posture on the spine



200 lbs Pressure



100 lbs Pressure

Please give this to a friend or colleague if you think Chiropractic may help them.

Have them call us on **01276 21637**

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