

Sciatica: Causes and Treatments

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Sciatic nerve pain, often referred to as sciatica, can cause severe pain that shoots down one or both legs. The pain can become so bad, it is debilitating, and patients can have difficulty getting relief on their own. Read on to find out what sciatica is, how it is caused, and what can be done about it.

Sciatica is actually irritated nerve roots that come out of the spinal cord and form the sciatic nerve. The sciatic nerve runs through the lower back, through each hip, the buttocks, and down each leg into the ankle and foot. The pain felt can be felt from the lower back all the way through one or both legs. In some cases, the pain can go all the way to the patient's toes. Though it can happen in both legs, it most often only causes pain in one leg. In the legs, the pain is most often felt in the back of the thigh and calf. The pain and sensations felt can range widely. Pain can be dull and achy or sharp and severe. Many patients claim they feel the pain "shoot" down their leg. Other common symptoms include a burning sensation and tingling. In some cases, the patient may experience weakness in the leg, loss of feeling, and loss of bowel or bladder control or function. These symptoms require immediate medical attention.

Sciatica is most commonly caused when the sciatic nerve roots are pinched. The pinched sciatic nerve is often caused by a herniated disc or a bone spur. When there is a herniated disc or a bone spur between the L3 and S1 sections of the spine, pressure on the nerve roots can cause them irritation. Each section of the spine will cause different symptoms when the nerve is pressed on. Other causes include degenerative disc disease, spinal stenosis, and a slipped disc. Conditions that can cause sciatic nerve pain without touching the sciatic nerve roots include piriformis syndrome and sacroiliac joint dysfunction. Occasionally, sciatica can be caused due to nerve damage from another condition.

Sciatica is often resolved through non-surgical treatment. Spinal adjustments, spinal decompression, physical therapy, massage therapy, and even acupuncture are common treatment plans. If the nerve is being pinched due to a misalignment in the spine, spinal adjustments can provide relief. Spinal decompression can improve pressure caused by a herniated disc. Physical therapy can stretch and strengthen the area surrounding the spine and it can correct posture. Most cases of sciatica are able to be resolved within six to twelve weeks. In cases where the sciatica frequently reoccurs or is very severe, steroid injections or surgery may be recommended.

If you are suffering with sciatic nerve pain, there is often a resolvable cause. Talk with your chiropractor to come up with a treatment plan that will resolve your pain and promote a healthy spine.