

Understanding Sciatica

Sciatica, so-called because it involves the sciatic nerve, is a common cause of lower back pain. The sciatic nerve is actually a group of nerves bound in one nerve sheath, running from the lower back through the buttocks and thigh to the knee, then branching on down into the foot. It is the longest nerve in the body. So, besides pain deep in the buttock, an irritated sciatic nerve may also produce pain in the thigh that may radiate all the way down to the feet and include weakness and numbness in the legs.



What Causes Sciatica?

Some common causes include work that requires repetitive lifting or constant exposure to mechanical vibrations, including long hours behind the wheel of a car or truck.

Though poor posture and inactivity are not known to cause sciatica, strong abdominal and back muscles—which can be developed through exercise—can help keep your back healthy. A regular exercise routine might be particularly important if your job puts you at risk for back pain. Giving up smoking, if you smoke, may do your back some good, and will certainly contribute to your overall well-being.

Unfortunately, you can't always predict who will suffer from sciatica based on these risk factors. Often, a person who never lifts anything will suffer a sudden attack for no apparent reason.

What Makes Sciatica Hurt?

Some experts blame herniated discs. Discs are the fibrous pads between the vertebrae. When a disc herniates, it bulges and can press on the sciatic nerve. Other researchers blame the piriformis muscle in the buttocks—the muscle that allows you to lift your leg sideways. If inflamed by injury or overexertion, the piriformis muscle can press against the sciatic nerve. Thus there are many possible causes of sciatica. In most cases, an exact diagnosis may not be necessary.

Sciatica and Chiropractic Care.

Many cases of sciatica respond to simple procedures including exercise, modification of activities, and conservative care such as chiropractic adjustments, and certain therapy applications.

Only a very small percentage of sciatica cases require more invasive procedures such as surgery. Most cases of sciatica will respond to such chiropractic treatments within a few weeks or months.

If you believe that you are suffering from sciatica, call our office for an appointment. In less than 30 minutes, you will receive a complete consultation from a qualified expert who will prescribe the appropriate treatments.