

# Sciatica: Symptom not Diagnosis

## Back To Health Chiropractic

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## What is Sciatica? The Chiropractic approach.

**Sciatic Nerve:** Your sciatic nerve is your longest and largest nerve. It is about as thick as a man's baby finger. It's made up of 5 roots that leave your low back, join in your pelvis and then travel to the muscles and joints of your thigh, knee, calf, ankle, foot and toes.

**What is sciatica?** If your sciatic nerve becomes inflamed, the condition is called sciatica. The pain can be intense!! If often follows the path of the nerve—down the back of your legs and thighs, ankle, foot and toes—but it can also radiate to your back! Along with burning and sharp pains, you may also feel nerve sensations such as pins-and-needles, tingling, prickling, crawling sensations or tenderness. Ironically your leg might also feel numb. To complicate matters, although sciatic pain is usually in the back of the legs or thighs, in some people it can be in the front or side of the legs or even in the hips. For some it can be down both legs.

**Like a Knife:** The type of pain may vary. There may be constant throbbing pain but then it may let up for hours or even days: it may ache or be knife-like. Sometimes postural changes, like lying down or changing positions, affect the pain and sometimes they don't. In severe cases,

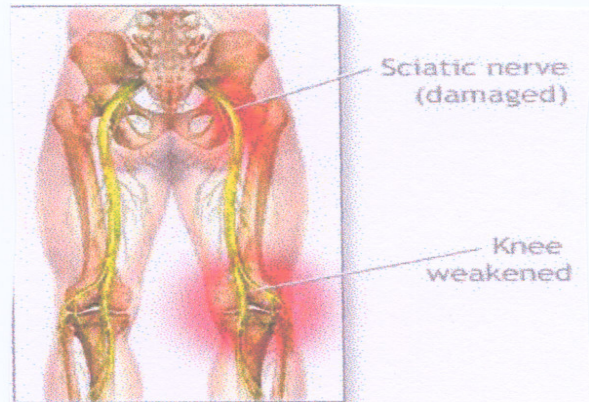
sciatica can cause a loss of reflexes or even a wasting of your calf muscles. For sciatica sufferers, a good night's sleep may be a thing of the past. Simple things like walking, bending, turning sitting or standing up can be difficult.

**Causes of Sciatica:** Like most other conditions, sciatica has a wide variety of causes, but an unhealthy spine with a protruded or ruptured disc can irritate the sciatic nerve causing sciatica. Sciatica has been reported following accidents and after childbirth, usually due to spinal misalignments. Sometimes sitting with a wallet in your pocket over a long period of time may cause a problem. Muscle tightness (piriformis) in the area can also restrict the sciatic nerve and cause irritation.

### The Medical Approach:

The medical approach to sciatica is symptom treatment with painkillers, muscle relaxers and orthopedic devices such as traction and physical therapy. Sometime the pain of sciatica is hard to treat with painkillers because the pain is too strong. As with any pain killer there is always a risk of dependency. Orthopedic surgery may be resorted to if the pain persists.

**The Chiropractic Approach:** Chiropractors



correct the vertebral subluxation complex (misalignments), which causes poor spinal alignment and nerve pressure. By doing this, chiropractors relieve stress on the spinal nerves, joints and discs. Just as you get your car's alignment checked and corrected, you should periodically get your spine's alignment checked out and corrected. If you do suffer from sciatica, chiropractic care is needed to relieve stress on the nerve.

### Chiropractic Results:

For over 100 years, chiropractors have given spinal adjustments to millions of patients, many of them sciatica sufferers. Many sciatica sufferers have reported dramatic relief of their condition after chiropractic care. Chiropractic care has even saved them from having to have spinal surgery as their next option.

Sciatica when the problems first occur. However, even to those who have suffered for longer periods of time and have been through the medical specialist route, chiropractic may provide excellent results. Chiropractic care is a "drug free", natural alternative.

### Conclusions:

To millions of sciatica sufferers, chiropractic's unique approach to wellness has been helpful. If the spine becomes misaligned or distorted, it could damage (impinge) the nerves it is designed to protect. The impinged nerves can upset the delicate workings of the nervous system, weaken the body and set a stage for pain and malfunction. Throughout your life you have your teeth, blood pressure and eyes checked—How about your spine??

## Piriformis Syndrome-another irritation to the Sciatic Nerve

Piriformis syndrome is a condition in which the piriformis muscle irritates the sciatic nerve and causes pain in the buttocks and may cause pain along the back of the leg and into the foot. This condition is most common among active individuals, especially runners.

While there is some controversy in the medical community, many health professionals believe that an accurate diagnosis and comprehensive management approach are critical to alleviate the painful symptoms of this condition.

### What is the piriformis?

The piriformis muscle is a small muscle that lies deep in the buttocks (behind the gluteus maximus). The muscle:

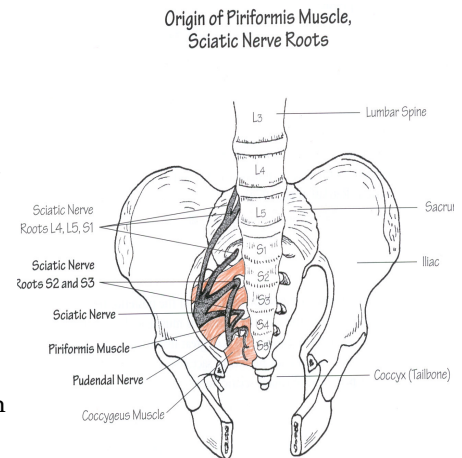
- \*Starts at the lower spine and connects to the upper surface of each femur (thighbone).

- \*Functions to assist rotating the hip.

- \*Runs horizontally, with the sciatic nerve running vertically directly beneath it.

Piriformis syndrome can develop when the piriformis muscle become tight or spasms and places pressure on the sciatic nerve. The pressure on the sciatic nerve can cause pain in

the lower back and/or pain that radiates to the buttocks and down the leg.



## Sciatica Q & A??

### How do you treat piriformis syndrome?

First of all you should be assessed by one of the Registered Massage Therapists to be certain that we are dealing with piriformis syndrome. They would treat the condition with deep tissue massage as well as using the Active Release technique. The use of these techniques would help to relieve pain and compression by decreasing muscle tightness, as well as treating any associated trigger points. The massage therapists would also assess the surrounding muscles for any dysfunction

that may be related to piriformis syndrome.

### What if my sciatica is not caused by piriformis syndrome? What other causes are there?

Other causes of sciatica are:

**Sacroiliitis:** -inflammation of your sacroiliac joint. This is the joint where the tail bone articulates with the pelvic bones. Have your chiropractor assess your SI joints.

**Lumbar Facet Joint Syndrome:** -is a

pain that comes from the joints of your back causing not only back discomfort, but can also give sciatica like symptoms. Your chiropractor can take care of this for you.

**Lumbar Spinal Stenosis:** This is a narrowing of the spinal canal putting direct pressure on the sciatic nerve. This narrowing can be from a herniated disc protrusion or arthritic changes in the spine.

**Herniated Disc:** This is the most common cause of sciatica. The disc be-

## Acupuncture and Sciatica

Traditional Chinese medicine can quickly treat the symptoms of pain associated with the pinching of the sciatic nerve as it leaves the lower back.

From the biomedical perspective, the cause is generally considered structural in nature. If the bones of the spine are damaged, or misaligned, they can pinch or irritate the sciatic nerve.

Acupuncture can help the pain, but it is important to see a chiropractor for the

mechanical problems as well. In North American culture we talk about catching a cold. In Chinese medicine, we can catch, damp, or wind. These factors can settle into the acupuncture meridians (which run through the body), causing pain or cold, they move around like wind, or become thick like dampness. In the case of sciatica they would say that different external factors have settled into one of the meridians that traverse the leg. Usually that is the uri-

nary bladder meridian. Fine needles are inserted along the pathway of the meridian, this dissipates the external factor (pathogen) and activates energy (Qi) to remove the pain .

**Dr. Rodwin** uses both Chiropractic and acupuncture to treat sciatica. This has been a very successful treatment protocol for sciatica relief.