

Sciatica

Summary

Sciatica refers to pain caused by the sciatic nerve, which starts at the lower back and runs through the buttock and down the back of each leg. The sensation caused by sciatica can range from mild, sporadic discomfort through to debilitating pain, rendering the sufferer incapacitated and unable to perform day-to-day tasks.

Sciatica is a type of referred pain, meaning that it is the symptom of another underlying condition, such as a slipped disc or an arthritic disease. Nerve entrapment release, Active Release Technique, joint and soft tissue mobilisation and manipulation can be helpful for relieving long-term sciatic pain or discomfort.

The sciatic nerve is the largest nerve in the human body, responsible for delivering motor and sensory functions to the legs and feet. It begins at the lower spine and travels down the back of the legs, where it branches into two at the knee, continuing to the feet.

Sciatica is referred nerve pain as a result of another condition, which places pressure on or irritates the sciatic nerve. In many cases the pain will go away over the course of several weeks, with the aid of pain-killers or anti-inflammatory medication. For more serious conditions, surgery may be required to treat the underlying cause of the sciatica pain. Sufferers who experience a sudden loss of bladder or bowel control, or accelerating weakness in the legs are urged to seek urgent medical advice.



Sciatica can often feel similar to lower back pain

Treatments like nerve entrapment release, Active Release Technique, joint and soft tissue mobilisation and manipulation can generally help to ease the pain of sciatica.

Causes of sciatica

Sciatica is caused by irritation of the sciatic nerve, which can be a symptom of the following:

Trauma to the spine

Herniated disc (slipped disc)

Spinal stenosis

Piriformis syndrome

Pregnancy
Cauda equina syndrome (spinal tumour)
Degenerative disc disease
Isthmic spondylolisthesis
Sacroiliac joint dysfunction

Over training
Muscular imbalance
Trigger points
Postural habits

Other symptoms of sciatica

The symptoms of sciatica are generally only felt on one side of the body, although it's not unheard of for it to be felt on both. These symptoms may include:

Severe shooting pain down the leg
Hot pain in the buttock
Aching in the buttock, hamstring and calf
Pain in the ankle, foot and toes
Increased pain when lifting or straining
Increased pain when coughing

Lower back pain
Tingling or prickling sensations
A 'pins and needles' sensation
Numbness or weakness in the leg
Pain which worsens when sitting or standing
Relief when lying down

Top tips for sciatic nerve care

get plenty of rest (but not too much, as this can worsen symptoms)
focus on improving your posture when sitting and standing
visit your chemist and find out what over-the-counter medications are available
ensure you're sleeping on a high quality mattress
take warm baths to soothe and ease pain
practice gentle back exercises
invest in ergonomic furniture with lumbar support

Effective treatment of sciatica

For chronic sciatic nerve pain, your doctor may recommend such treatments such as chemonucleolysis (injecting an enzyme into the vertebral disc) or epidural injections. Prescription pain-relief or anti-inflammatory medications may also help to ease the symptoms of sciatica.

Alternatively, physical therapies such as nerve entrapment release, Active Release Technique, joint and soft tissue mobilisation and manipulation may also help sufferers of sciatica.

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With a Masters in Clinical Chiropractic from RMIT University, Shermain has provided chiropractic and movement rehabilitation services at international sporting competitions, professional dancers, professional football players and professional athletes.

At Jurmaine Health, she helps patients address and treat common musculoskeletal symptoms and conditions, including back pain, neck pain; shoulder pain; nerve pain, joint pain and many other conditions

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