



SCIATICA

Sciatica is a term used to describe compression or irritation of the sciatic Nerve. The Sciatic nerve emerges from the lower segments of your back from the spinal cord and runs into your bottom and down the leg. The sciatic nerve splits at the back of your thigh and continues as two separate nerves to the foot.

Often the pain can be felt in different places in the leg, it can sometimes be felt in the bottom or upper thigh or it can go all the way down into the foot and ankle. Some people don't get any pain in their back at all. This can be quite confusing and this often causes concern and worry.

When the nerve is affected at some point along its course from the back to the foot and ankle, it can affect the information that travels inside the nerve. This can be related to movement or sensation (feel) of the skin.

A change in movement or sensation in any part of the leg is an indication that the nerve isn't happy. When there is something causing the nerve to produce altered sensations or changes in movement, this is called Neuropathic Pain. This simply means nerve related or nerve driven pain.



TORUS
WELLBEING CLINIC

Signs And Symptoms of Sciatica

Because of the path of the nerve, pain can be felt in a number of different places.

This could be:

- From the low back into the back of the thigh
- In the calf
- In the foot

The pain can be felt in one leg or both.

Nerve related pain can often be described as;

- Burning, stabbing, shooting
- Itching
- Tingling
- Pins and needles
- A Cold sensation, Numbness or altered sensation to touch
- Even a sensation of ants crawling on the skin or running water
- You might also feel the leg or the foot is weaker than the other side or you might catch your toe when you are walking.

Causes of Sciatica

A number of things can contribute to sciatica but the most common is that something is compressing the nerve.

This can be:

- A disc (the gel-like spacers between the bones within the spine) pressing on the nerve,
- Inflammation of the nerve itself,
- As we age, there may be some change to the height of the discs. This can narrow the space through which the Sciatic nerve passes. If this space is smaller and a bit roughened, the nerve may become irritated.
- Tightness of the surrounding muscle groups can also contribute to Sciatica in some cases
- Coughing and sneezing could make your symptoms worse

Top Tips to Manage Sciatica

Keep Moving!

It may hurt to move around but it isn't doing any harm. Movement helps blood, Oxygen and nutrients get to the area to help it heal and settle. Gentle walking is a great way to encourage this.

Pace Your Activity

Sitting, standing or lying for long periods of time isn't good for sciatica, it makes you stiff and is more painful when you do move. Pacing the sitting, lying, standing and walking by doing a bit of each throughout the day is the best way to go.

Gentle Exercise

Don't over-do it by doing lots of exercise. Gentle but regular exercise is the key. Gentle back stretches are helpful, bending forwards towards your knees, backwards and side to side can help.

Avoid heavy lifting or repeated bending and carrying

This can put more stress through the back when it is already irritated, so gently does it.

Heat or Ice?

Although there are no hard and fast rules about whether to use heat or ice, heat using a heat pack wrapped in a towel, or a warm towel straight from the Tumble Dryer can help to relax the muscles.

Pain Relief

Take regular pain relief. If you find that paracetamol isn't effective, then speak to your Pharmacist about different pain relief that can help. NEVER take medication prescribed for someone else.

Physiotherapy

Your Physiotherapist will thoroughly assess your movements and provide expert advice and education on how to help.

Further Support - when to seek help

Sciatica is usually what we refer to as a self-limiting condition. This means that it tends to run its course in around 4-6 weeks. However, it can be normal for the pain to last for longer than this.

If you feel that the pain is getting worse rather than better, or that the pain is not controlled by painkillers, then contact your GP for further advice.

If you have any of the following symptoms, you need to seek immediate help, attended A&E or contact 999

- Inability to pass urine
- Loss of control of your bladder or bowels (soiling or wetting yourself)
- Loss of sensation around your bladder outlet when wiping yourself.
- Loss of sensation during sexual intercourse
- Bilateral, unremitting leg pain with or without pins and needles

For further information and a thorough assessment, contact the Torus wellbeing book an appointment email:

info@toruswellbeingclinic.co.uk



Elgin Chambers, 24 Cemetery Road, Shelton, Stoke on Trent, ST4 2DL

Tel: 01782 273314 | info@toruswellbeingclinic.co.uk | www.toruswellbeingclinic.co.uk

Owner/Founder: Dr Nicola Brough PhD, RCST