

Sciatica

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Lower back pain that radiates to the back of thigh and into the leg is a condition known as sciatica. Sciatica is the term that we use to describe the symptoms of the inflamed Sciatic nerve which is the longest nerve in the body.

Symptoms of Sciatica often presents with pain (sharp at times) in the buttock area, or down the leg that gets worse when sitting. It may also cause burning; tingling or numbness down the leg. In some cases, weakness and an inability to weight bear or walk is evident.

Sciatica is common between the ages of 30 and 50 years of age. Most likely, it's caused by a herniated disc, which occurs when the outer covering of the disc tears, causing the gel-like substance to leak and compresses on roots of the sciatic nerve. So if you already suffer from a low back pain, you're more likely to experience sciatic type pain as well. It can also occur due to muscle tightness in the piriformis muscle (in the gluteal area), usually from prolonged sitting, or a direct fall.

While Sciatic symptoms may last anywhere from a few weeks to a couple of months, most of the time, it responds very well to self-care and non-invasive measures.

Self-Care Measures:

- Avoid prolonged sitting, so if you have a long commute each day, or drive for a living, then be sure to stop at least every hour for a quick walk.
- Stretch the piriformis muscle frequently to release any tension on the nerve.
- Maintain an active lifestyle, but avoid intense exercise.
- Heat/Ice, alternating between the two.
- Supportive back braces may help, only if the source is herniated disc.

Physical Therapy:

Most sciatic symptoms are resolved with physical therapy.

- Ultrasound: is a deep heat that increases blood flow and helps to break up scar tissue.
- Laser: Cold laser is a new modality approved by the FDA that promotes healing and resolves inflammation.
- Electrical Stimulation: is used to decrease spasticity in the muscle and reduces the intensity of pain.
- Spinal Mobilization: Is a specialized hand-on techniques used to reduce spinal herniation.
- Therapeutic exercises: Flexibility and strength training to condition the muscles.

Other more aggressive treatments may involve anti-inflammatory medication or muscle relaxants; narcotics may be prescribed for short term pain relief. Steroid injections or epidural injections may be recommended to subdue inflammation if more conservative treatments don't help. Surgery is the last option, in severe cases where bowel or bladder incontinence is an issue.

At trinity Rehab, we specialize in the treatment of sciatica and other spinal related issues. Please call 732 219-5700, or visit us at any of our locations for any questions or a free screening evaluation.