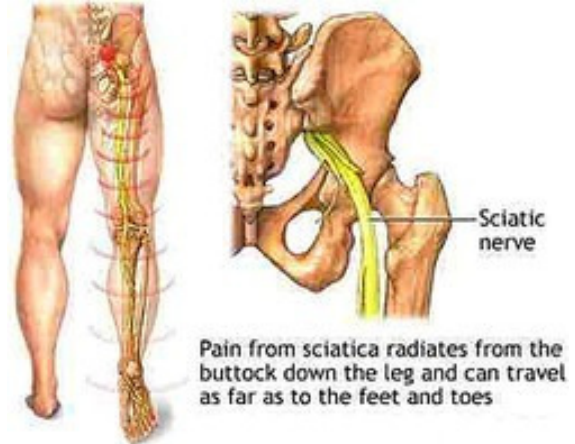


Sciatica

Overview

Sciatica (pronounced sigh-AT-ih-ka) is low back pain combined with a pain through the buttock and down one leg. The pain usually goes past the knee and may go farther to the foot. Sometimes, weakness in the leg muscles occurs with sciatica.



The sciatic nerves are the largest nerves in the body and are about the size of your little finger. They come out of the spinal column low in the back and then go behind the hip joint, down the buttock, and down the back of the leg to the foot.

Sciatica is different from other forms of low back pain because there are 2 sciatic nerves, and the pain is usually on 1 side.

The pain is usually a shooting pain, like electricity. It can also burn like fire or tingle much like the feeling when your leg "goes to sleep." The pain can range from slightly annoying to totally unbearable. Some people have pain in one part of the leg and numbness in another part of the same leg.

Sciatica Symptoms

The most common symptom from sciatica is pain. Most people describe a deep, severe pain that starts low on one side of the back and then shoots down the buttock and the leg with certain movements.

The pain is usually worse with both prolonged sitting and standing. Some people describe the worst pain when trying to stand from a low sitting position, such as standing up after sitting on a toilet seat.

In most people, the pain is made worse by sneezing, coughing, laughing, or a hard bowel movement. Bending backward can also make the pain worse.

You may also notice a weakness in your leg or foot, along with the pain. The weakness may become so bad you can't move your foot.

Sciatica Causes

Sciatica is caused by irritation of the sciatic nerve. Most of the time you will not remember doing anything to hurt yourself. Occasionally, you will suddenly get the pains after lifting something heavy or moving quickly.

The sciatic nerve can be pinched or stretched.

Herniated Disc

A herniated disc (sometimes called a slipped disc) is the most common cause of sciatica.

Discs are the cushions between the bones in the back. They act like "shock absorbers" when we move, bend, and lift. They look like checkers in size and shape.

There is a tough ring around the outside and a thick jellylike center inside (called a nucleus pulposus). If the outer edge of the disc ruptures, the center can push through and put pressure on the sciatic nerve, leading to the pain of sciatica (referred to as a herniated nucleus pulposus as the syndrome).

Spinal Stenosis

Spinal stenosis is a narrowing of the canal that contains the spinal cord. As we age, the bone can overgrow and put pressure on the sciatic nerve. Many people with spinal stenosis have sciatica on both sides of the back.

Spondylolisthesis

Spondylolisthesis is a condition in which one backbone has slipped forward over another backbone, resulting in pressure on the sciatic nerve.

Piriformis Syndrome

Piriformis syndrome causes the sciatic nerve to become trapped deep in the buttock by the piriformis muscle. The symptoms are the same as those of sciatica.

Other Causes

Sciatica can also be caused by other effects of aging, such as osteoarthritis and osteoporosis.

Rarely, sciatica is a symptom of a far more serious problem, such as tumor, blood clot, or abscess (boil). Other causes of sciatic pain include Lyme disease, fibromyalgia, pelvic infections, Reiter syndrome, and various infectious causes of arthritis (which could be caused by bacteria, a virus, or a fungus).

If you have experienced any of the above-mentioned conditions or symptoms, you may be a candidate for conservative therapy at our office.

Give us a call to find out today (908) 753-0144.