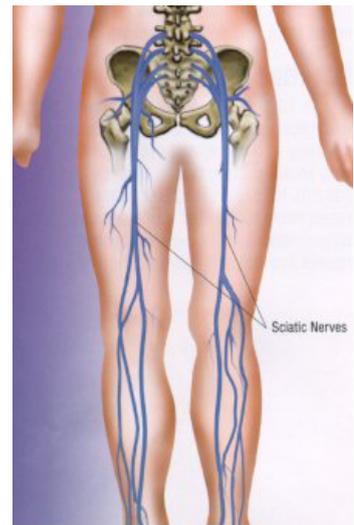




sciatica

Sciatica is a relatively common form of low back pain and leg pain. This pain along the sciatic nerve can be caused when a root that helps form the sciatic nerve is pinched or irritated. Pain is felt down the back of the leg and may have associated numbness, pins and needles or tingling.

Sciatica is usually caused by pressure on the sciatic nerve from a herniated disc (also referred to as a ruptured disc, pinched nerve, slipped disc, etc.). Sciatica occurs most frequently in people between 30 and 50 years of age. Often a particular event or injury does not cause sciatica, but rather it may develop as a result of general wear and tear on the structures of the lower spine. The vast majority of people who experience sciatica get better with time (usually a few weeks or months) and find pain relief with non-surgical treatments.



signs and symptoms

For some people, the pain from sciatica can be severe and debilitating. For others, the pain from sciatica might be infrequent and irritating, but has the potential to get worse. Usually, sciatica only affects one side of the lower body, and the pain often radiates from the lower back all the way through the back of the thigh and down through the leg. Depending on where the sciatic nerve is affected, the pain may also radiate to the foot or toes.

One or more of the following sensations may occur as a result of sciatica:

- Pain in the rear or leg that is worse when sitting
- Burning or tingling down the leg
- Weakness, numbness or difficulty moving the leg or foot
- A constant pain on one side of the rear
- A shooting pain that makes it difficult to stand up
- Low back pain may be present along with the leg pain, but usually the low back pain is less severe than the leg pain



typical pain pattern of sciatica

treatment

For acute sciatica pain, heat and/or ice packs are most readily available and can help alleviate the pain, especially in the acute phase. Usually ice or heat is applied for approximately 20 minutes, and repeated every two hours. Most people use ice first, but some people find more relief with heat. The two may be alternated to help with sciatica pain relief.

Over-the-counter or prescription medications may also be helpful in relieving sciatica. Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) or oral steroids can be helpful in reducing the inflammation and pain associated with sciatica, but should be used with caution.

Changing some habits such as not placing a wallet or bulky items in your back pocket may help.

Regularly stretching your piriformis may help in cases where the piriformis muscle is responsible for the impingement of the sciatic nerve.

Non weight bearing activity is preferred to straight rest during times of pain or discomfort. Water running is a great alternative to running.

If the sciatica pain is severe, an epidural steroid injection can be performed to reduce the inflammation.



a.



b.



c.

piriformis stretch: a) lean over your front leg (which is bent in front of you); b) gradually increase the stretch by lowering your body over your front leg. c) lie over your front leg. Use your arms to take some weight if too painful.