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3 Questions on Sciatica - do you know the "right" answers?

Are you one of the thousands you have sciatica. Do you have that nagging back pain that now travels down your leg... making you feel tired, frustrated and grumpy?

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What is sciatica? Sciatica is the official name given to a pain in the leg, foot, or buttock, brought on by a form of irritation to the sciatic nerve, the longest nerve in the entire body.

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If you have not had trauma, if your general health is generally okay, your sciatica will most likely respond to some simple self help techniques you can use at home. It can ease and disappear quickly... but as the saying goes - if pain persists see your doctor.

Question 1... How far does your sciatica travel? The sciatic nerve can be irritated in the lower back, pelvis and as a result of muscular tightness in the buttock. If you have lower back pain and pain travels out to the buttock, this can still be **sciatica**. It is just a lesser form and easily corrected with various lower back stretches, exercises and joint techniques.

Sciatica is not a specific disease, instead it is a condition characteristic of several different diseases. Simply put, it is a mild to intense pain in the left or right leg. Sciatica is caused by a compression of one or more of the five sets of nerve roots in the lower back. These compressions are typically caused by a disc rupture or bone spur in the lumbar spine. It causes pain, numbness, tingling, and weakness in the arms or legs. This is referred to as radiculopathy. If the nerve root causing the problem is in the neck it is called cervical radiculopathy. Sciatica is called a lumbar radiculopathy since it occurs in the lower back.

For more information on Sciatica issues just visit Sciatica - <http://www.back-pain-advisor.com/sciatica.html>

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When the nucleus breaks through the annulus a herniated disc occurs. It is called a 'non-contained' disc disorder. A bulging disc is also known as a contained disc disorder. This means the nucleus pulposus (gel-like center) remains 'contained' within the annulus fibrosus (tire-like outer wall) of the disc. Because a herniated disc is a 'non-contained' disc disorder, the consequences of a herniated disc are worse. Whether a disc or herniates or bulges, disc material can press against an adjacent nerve root and compress delicate nerve tissue and cause **sciatica**. Irritation and nerve compression cause pain and inflammation often leading to extremity tingling, muscle weakness and numbness. The disc material itself also contains an acidic, chemical irritant (hyaluronic acid) that causes nerve inflammation. The herniated nucleus causes direct compression of the nerve root against the interior of the bony spinal canal.

Treatment for **sciatica** is varied. It is only possible to find out what treatment is best for you by going to your doctor for an accurate diagnosis. Your doctor may order an MRI to conclude the exact cause of sciatic pain, although many physicians can determine the cause through physical examination alone.

Piriformis Syndrome Due to the lack of MRI or x-ray findings, it may be difficult to diagnose and treat piriformis syndrome. The piriformis muscle connects to the thighbone, assists in hip rotation and is located in the lower part of the spine. When muscle spasms develop in the piriformis muscle thereby compressing the sciatic nerve, Piriformis syndrome develops. The sciatic nerve runs beneath the piriformis muscle. Piriformis syndrome is named for the piriformis muscle and the pain caused when the muscle irritates the sciatic nerve. Lumbar Bulging or Herniated Disc

Learning about potential risk factors and taking appropriate action will help ensure a stronger, more flexible, and healthier lower back. By Dr. Ralph Santonastaso

Proper stretching and exercising, combined with over-the-counter pain medications can assist on the road to recovery. If your pain is not relieved by the milder pain medications, your doctor may prescribe a narcotic analgesic. However be advised that these medications can cause nausea, dizziness, and drowsiness, and may result in dependency if taken over long periods of time. In extreme cases, surgery may be required to remove fragment of the disc.

Are there risk factors for back pain? And, if there are, what can I do to keep myself healthy and well? Your chiropractor can help answer these questions and more.

Another cause of sciatica is trauma caused by accidents. The impact may injure nerves or cause fragments of bone to compress the nerves (lumbar or sacral spinal nerve roots)

There are many easy-to-do exercises for your abdominal muscles. The key is to actually do them - and do them after you're finished doing the rest of whatever exercises you've scheduled for that day. How often? Three times a week is plenty. Abdominal routines are quick - no more than 10 minutes. And, remember to use your abdominal muscles throughout the day. Imagine your abdominals are being pulled in and lifted up. This is not a "tightening" - your thought should be "activate". Your body will know what to do, once you've started adding consistent abdominal training to your exercise routine.

If you think you may be suffering from sciatica, be sure and contact your physician to get a proper diagnosis! Liana Mirkin is the IT Director for Spina Systems International, Inc., a company which specializes in distributing the

It is important to stay active. Do exercises that develop muscles in your back and stomach. This helps to stabilize your spine. It is also important to maintain a reasonable body weight. Ensure that you practice good posture, and sleep on a mattress that is neither too hard or too soft. You should always discuss health matters with your physician, especially if you suffer progressive weakness, as this may constitute a medical emergency. The problem thought to be something easily treated may be a serious condition caused by the compression of the nerve roots in the lower end of the spinal canal, which requires immediate medical attention.

Muscles get stronger when they're required to do work. Also exercise helps "train" the soft tissues around a joint - the ligaments and tendons - these supporting structures "learn" how to withstand mechanical stresses and loads without becoming injured. Basically, when you exercise - when you do any kind of exercise - your body gets "smarter" and you're less likely to get those annoying back problems.¹

There are six typical causes of Sciatica. Spondylolisthesis Spondylolisthesis is usually found at birth, early childhood or acquired from physical trauma such as weightlifting. It is a disorder that most often affects the lumbar spine. Spondylolisthesis is characterized by one vertebra slipping forward over an adjacent vertebra. Often sciatic leg pain is caused when a nerve root compresses due to the vertebra being displaced and slipping.

One primary risk factor relates to exercise. Everyone has heard, "if you don't use it, you lose it". If you're not exercising regularly, your back muscles are deconditioned and much more susceptible to injury - the strains and sprains we're accustomed to calling "back pain".

Spinal Tumors Spinal tumors can be benign or malignant, but are fairly rare. They cause sciatica due to pressure on the disc. Trauma

Question 2... What type of sciatic pain do you have? Knowing which type of pain you suffer helps to determine how severe your *sciatica* is. Most people with *sciatica* will experience pain, it may be a gnawing, and toothache feeling or it may throb or shoot down the leg. Others will have a numb feeling and some may experience the muscles not holding their strength. If you look at the type of pain, you can see how serious it is.

Sciatica is most commonly caused by a slipped disc in the lower back, some form of arthritis, or a pinched nerve. It begins with back pain, followed by calf or hamstring pain, and sometimes included numbness in the toes. Forms of sciatica, resulting from inflammation get better with time, healing themselves. However, bed rest is not the best way to treat **sciatica**. It is shown that remaining active and performing exercises that are not weight bearing can help. Given time, even herniated spinal discs can heal.

Can you actually imagine being free of sciatica? Do you really believe there is a cure, so you can enjoy all the activities you use to do? Wouldn't life be perfect again if that pesky *sciatica* disappeared once and for all!

Sciatica is often confused. It can be a serious condition or it may be an irritation that is easily corrected. How do you know? If know the answer to three questions, then you can decide whether you can correct your **sciatica** yourself or you need to seek help from a structural specialist.

The deeper layers of the nerve then cause the sharper, definite pain. The deepest levels will cause actual numbness and loss of muscle power, strength and endurance. If you experience symptoms of the deeper layer disturbances, then professional help is essential.

To simply correct this type of *sciatica*, you need to know this! If your lower back pain travels down the leg to your foot or ankle, then obviously the sciatic nerve is irritated at a greater level. The further your *sciatica* travels, generally speaking, the worse the condition. In these situations professional advice and treatment is indicated.

Dr Graeme Teague is an expert in the structural field, and has been in practice since 1991. His newly launched web site The Back Pain Advisor - <http://www.back-pain-advisor.com> - strives to give you valuable and expert advice, tips and information on your back pain issues.

Spinal stenosis related to age is the more commonly acquired form. This form of the stenosis condition may cause various spinal components to sag or bulge from arthritis. Discs, joints, and ligaments can be affected. These changes, which occur with age, can have the effect of narrowing the spinal canal and thus trigger spinal stenosis pain.

A related risk factor is weak abdominal muscles. When you were a kid, at some point one of your gym teachers probably told you to "suck in your stomach". Actually, it turns out that was pretty good advice. Your abdominal muscles support the muscles of your lower back. If your abdominals are weak or if you're not using them - letting them hang out and droop instead of keeping them activated - your body weight has to be held up by the muscles of your lower back. They're not designed to do that - they're designed to move your spine around. And eventually, these lower back muscles will give way under the excess strain. The result is a very painful lower back injury.

There is one type of spinal stenosis that exists where individuals are born with a narrow spinal canal. In people that have this condition even minor structural changes to the spine can cause severe spinal stenosis.

If you know the right answers to the 3 important Sciatica questions, sciatica can disappear quickly. If you fit the criteria of caution, then be cautious and seek professional intervention. Don't let sciatica "lay you up"... learn to get rid of sciatica once and for all.

Question 3... What caused your sciatica? If you have had a fall or injury then sciatica needs attention. Sciatica at times is caused by disc injuries and spinal conditions that relate to joint instability. These need to be assessed and treated accordingly. Although the majority of sciatic nerve irritation comes after situations that appear completely normal. Your normal daily activity should not cause **sciatica**, however a build up of tension can lead to sciatic nerve problems.

Nerves, when irritated, exhibit definite pain patterns. The outer fibers of the nerve create what is called paraesthesia - which mean altered sensation. You may experience tingling, the gnawing feeling and a sensation of numbness. The numbness is a sensation not a reality. You can check this by pinching the area or using a pin prick. If you still feel pain with these then you have paraesthesia not true numbness.

Lumbar Spinal Stenosis The condition of spinal stenosis results in the spinal canal narrowing. The narrowing causes pressure on the spinal cord and spinal nerves. Common in patients over the age of 50 and with causes that are not clear, spinal stenosis has two different types frequently described. A common complaint of spinal stenosis patients is leg pain which gets worse with walking. Another complaint is back pain. Sitting and bending can sometimes alleviate these pains.

Accu-SPINA machine, which treats chronic back pain in 86%-94% of patients without surgery. You may find the website at SpinaProgram.com

Risk factors for back pain may also be found in your personal and family medical history.^{2,3} During your initial visit your chiropractor will ask you about accidents and surgeries you've experienced, and discuss any important elements in your family history. For example, surgery to remove an inflamed gallbladder or appendix or to repair a hernia may result in weakened abdominal muscles. A motor vehicle accident or a fall from a height may have caused injuries that healed with soft tissue scarring.

To have this goal is admirable... but you need to know 3 very important facts first. Or your sciatica may not disappear and you may suffer for a long time yet. Something you do not want... or need.

<http://www.gardenstatepainrelief.com/1>

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