

SCIATIC-TYPE PAIN & SCIATICA

Sciatica is a term for symptoms of pain along the large sciatic nerve that runs from the lower back down the back of each leg. It is relatively common, and occurs when the sciatic nerve is irritated or compressed by a problem in the low back. When any of the nerve roots in the lower back are irritated, pain travels from the nerve root to the sciatic nerve, down to the buttock, and sometimes down the back of the leg.

The term *sciatica* is often misused, and patients may try to self-diagnose and self-treat the wrong cause of their sciatica. Any type of leg pain is often referred to as sciatica, but in fact, there are many causes of leg pain that are not medically classified as sciatica and need to be treated differently. Given the multitude of conditions that can cause sciatic or sciatic-type pain, it is imperative to meet with a chiropractor for the appropriate diagnosis. While rare, pain in the legs may be caused by serious medical conditions that warrant immediate assessment.

Causes: Neurological irritation in the lumbar spine (such as from a bulging disc) with pain into one or both legs will cause what is medically referred to as “sciatica.” However, other conditions can cause *sciatic-type* pain into the legs – such as sacroiliac joint inflammation, piriformis muscle tension, and facet joint pain.

Symptoms: Signs and symptoms can include, but are not limited to:

- Sharp, shooting, aching or burning pain in one or both legs
- Numbness or decreased sensation in one or both legs
- Tingling or pins and needles sensations in one or both legs
- Muscle weakness in one or both legs

* In the most serious cases of sciatica, spinal cord and/or excessive neurological compression can occur. If you experience any of the following symptoms, seek immediate medical attention.

- Loss of bowel or bladder control
- Inability to urinate or defecate
- Sudden loss of feeling in buttocks, legs, or arms
- Inability to walk or use arms, from severe acute weakness
- Fever accompanied with back or neck pain

How our experts can help:

If you feel symptoms of pain in the buttocks or leg, or numbness, tingling or other neurological symptoms in your leg, it is important to see a chiropractor for an accurate diagnosis of the cause of your symptoms. Treatment options will be determined based on the clinical diagnosis. Depending on the findings of the history and patient examination, the chiropractor will recommend an individualized plan of management.