



Discover Life Chiropractic

Better Health Naturally

# Chiropractic Care of Sciatica

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# Chiropractic and Sciatica

Sciatica is a type of pain that is caused by the irritation of the sciatic nerve. The compressed nerve root of the lower spine causes immense pain similar to a shooting leg cramp. Most people who suffer from this pain have difficulties walking or sitting.

According to the study released in the publication JAMA, more than \$86 billion a year is spent in the United States for the treatment of sciatica and other lower back pain syndromes. It is also important to take note that four out of five adult Americans suffer from lower back pain during their lifetime, as reported in National Institute of Health. If you suffer from sciatica or know someone who suffers from it, it is important to learn more about this debilitating condition.

*Sciatica is characterized by putting pressure on the lumbar nerve and is cited as one of the most common reasons behind lower back pain.*

## Understanding Sciatica

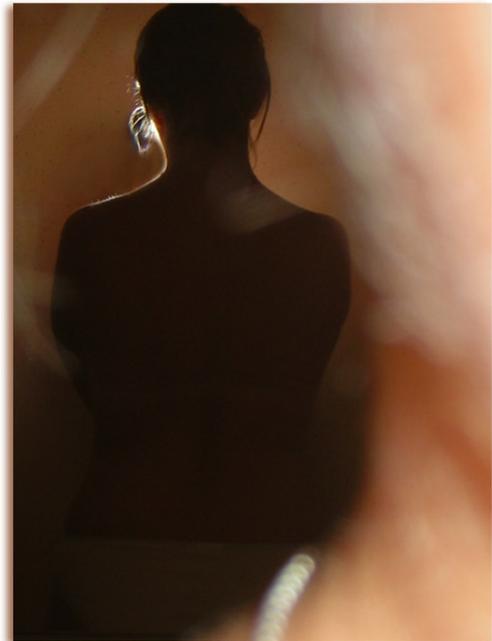
Sciatica is not considered as a diagnosis, but merely a description of symptoms that comprise lower back pain. It is characterized by putting pressure on the lumbar nerve roots that cause pain in all points of the sciatic nerve. The sciatic nerve is the large nerve that originates from the lower back. It is located near the spine, travels through the pelvis region, deep towards the buttock area, and then through the legs. It is considered as the widest and longest nerve in the body.

The pain felt due to compressed sciatica can vary from numb tingling to a shooting burning sensation. The pain occurs mainly on one side but can radiate to the buttocks down to the legs and feet. Patients who suffer from sciatica reports that pain gets worse on certain occasions that involve standing or sitting for long periods of time, sneezing or laughing, and after bending or walking for a long time. It is important to take note that sciatica pain usually subsides within six weeks, but if you are suffering from any underlying conditions, the pain may persist or get worse. It is important to seek professional help and deal with sciatica pain.

## Facts About Sciatica

Sciatica pain can either range from a minor nuisance to a debilitating condition. It is described as a set of symptoms of an underlying medical condition. This is the reason why it is also dubbed as lower back pain. Below are the facts that you need to know about sciatica.

- The common underlying condition of sciatica varies and depends on the age of individuals. Those who are under 60, the common causes include degenerative disc disease, lumbar herniated disc, and isthmic spondylolisthesis. Patients who are more than 60 years old suffer from sciatica probably because of degenerative spondylolisthesis and lumbar stenosis.
- Sciatica also comes in different names such as lumbar radiculopathy and lower back pain to name a few so don't be confused if you hear the terms being used interchangeably.



- It accounts for 3% to 4% of the population suffering from temporary disability. In fact, it is cited as one of the most common reasons behind lower back pain.

## Sciatic Nerve Anatomy

The sciatic nerve is the longest and largest single nerve in the body. It is as big as the thumb, particularly at its largest point. It supplies the strength as well as sensation to the legs. It connects the spinal cord to the muscles of the lower extremities like hamstrings, thighs as well as the lower leg and feet. Thus, if this nerve is impaired, it leads to the weakening of the muscles and the tingling or numbness of the lower extremities.

The sciatic nerve originates from the lower spine and exits the spinal cord through the gaps in the vertebrae. It is made up of five nerves and is formed on the left side of the lower spine by the fourth and fifth lumbar nerves as well as the first three nerves in the sacral spine.

The nerve that exits the spine between the L4 and L5 lumbar segment is dubbed as the L5 nerve root while the nerve that exits between the L5 and Sacral Segment 1 is called the S1 nerve root.

## Causes of Sciatica

**It is crucial to understand the underlying causes of sciatica pain to effectively treat the condition by addressing the root cause.**

Below are the common causes of lower back pain that are also associated with sciatica pain.

Sciatica is cited as one of the most common reasons behind lower back pain.

- **Lumbar herniated disc:** A herniated disc forms when the soft inner components of the disc leak out through the outer core. It is also termed as a ruptured disc, protruding disc or pinched nerve. It is the most common cause of sciatica pain because the protrusion can cause compression or pinching of the nerve.
- **Isthmic spondylolisthesis:** This condition happens when there is stress on one vertebra which results in its slipping forward and towards another vertebra. For instance, the L5 vertebra slipping forward to the S1 vertebra can cause compression of the sciatic nerve.
- **Degenerative disc disease:** Disc degeneration is a natural process that is associated with aging. However, this condition causes irritation of the sciatic nerve causing compression. Bone spurs are also related to degenerative disc disease that can press against the sciatic nerve, thereby causing pain.
- **Lumbar spinal stenosis:** This condition is characterized by the narrowing of the spinal canal. It commonly occurs with spinal arthritis. This condition is often associated with the aging process and is common in the older adult.
- **Piriformis syndrome:** This condition happens when the piriformis muscle of the buttock pinches the nerve root, resulting in sciatic pain.
- **Subluxation dysfunction:** The misalignment of the sacroiliac joint and lower lumbar spine can cause irritation of the L3-5 nerve roots and cause sciatica-like pain.



## Chiropractic Care

Common treatments of sciatica include taking pain medication or undergoing surgery.

However, there are other alternatives that are far more effective than these treatments. Chiropractic care for sciatica is one of the methods of treating the



pain without undergoing surgery. If you happen to be in Washington, you can approach Tacoma Chiropractors to help you manage your pain.

## Chiropractic Assessment

Chiropractic assessment of sciatica uses the triage concept to classify the causes of the low back pain. The reason for this assessment is to find out the root cause of sciatica so that the Tacoma chiropractors will be able to devise a way on how to treat the sciatica pain.

Your chiropractor will perform different tests in the office to determine how chiropractic can help. They will also request any appropriate medical information from other providers in order to have a clear picture of what you are really suffering from. After your evaluation the doctor will sit down with you and go over the treatment options and an expected timeline in which you should see changes.

# Chiropractic Treatment

*There are three types of chiropractic treatment for sciatica:  
Traction, Ice Therapy, and Spinal Adjustments.*

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Reliable Tacoma chiropractors examine the root cause of your sciatic pain. Based on the examination, the treatments used by Tacoma chiropractors are based on the notion that restriction in the spinal movement often leads to reduced function and pain. Moreover, they may perform non-invasive procedures to help heal the body from sciatica pain. Below are the chiropractic treatments available for treating sciatica pain.

- **Traction:** This can involve lying on foam wedges or towels to stretch spasmed tissues and help maintain alignment after an adjustment. It can also involve motorized traction like Leander to stretch and restore motion to individual segments
- **Ice Therapy:** This treatment reduces the inflammation on the affected area and is used to control and manage sciatica pain.
- **Spinal adjustments:** The core of chiropractic care for sciatica and other back pain is the spinal adjustment. This method frees the restricted movement of the spine as well as corrects the misaligned vertebrae. It helps reduce the irritability of the nerve that causes pain, spasms, and other sciatica symptoms.

## Conclusion

Sciatica can cause debilitating pain that can result in both short term and long term disability. At Discover Life Chiropractic we have seen many of both types of cases in the 25 years of treating clients. Too often we see patients after surgery and they wish their doctor had referred them to chiropractic first because now they have daily pain since the surgery didn't work. Don't let that be you! Before deciding to go for surgical treatment or injections come in for a chiropractic evaluation to determine if we can help. Let's evaluate you and sit down and talk about your options in conservative treatment. Then you can decide the best course for you.

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