

Sciatica is a very common condition. It represents a sensitivity of the sciatic nerve and is often associated with pain in the lower back or buttock.

The source of the problem may be related to a herniated disc. Compression of the sciatic nerve due to excessive muscle tension can also occur in the deep muscles of the buttocks, behind the knee and sometimes in the upper and lateral part of the leg.

Structures involved

The **sciatic nerve** originates from the **nerve roots** in the lower lumbar and upper sacral region. It is the largest nerve in the body. It passes under or sometimes even through the **piriformis muscle**. It can be compressed by the piriformis muscle when it is very tense. At the knee, the sciatic nerve between the medial and lateral hamstrings may be compressed.

Signs & Symptoms that you may experience

Each person will react differently after an injury and recovery will depend on the severity of the injury.

Sciatica can produce, but is not limited to, lower back or buttock pain radiating to the leg and toes, tingling or numbness, difficulty loading and squatting, and in some cases weakness. Symptoms are often increased when sitting with legs extended and elevated.

Recovery

Your rehabilitation plan, health profile, fitness level and nutritional status affect the recovery time.

In most cases, you can expect a full recovery from sciatica. As a general rule, this condition may take a few weeks to fully recover. However, if you have had sciatica for a long time, the recovery time may be longer.

► WHAT TO DO

Early Stage

Relative rest is a good way to reduce irritation to your nerve and prevent your condition from getting worse, but it is important to avoid overprotecting it. A few days of rest by reducing activities that cause pain may be necessary. A gradual return to your daily activities, light cardiovascular exercise (cycling, walking) and neural mobility exercises will allow for better recovery.

Rehabilitation

Follow your therapist's advice. This will help you manage the various stages of the healing process and increase the odds of successful rehabilitation. Your therapist will help you determine the cause of your symptoms and will accompany you throughout your rehabilitation program to restore your joint mobility and range of motion, lower back stabilizer muscle strength and endurance, and functional status.

According to the principles of sciatica rehabilitation, reducing muscle tension at the sites of nerve compression, regular cardiovascular and neural mobility exercise to restore normal nerve gliding between muscles are important elements of functional recovery. A progressive muscle strengthening program over a period of a few weeks is quite common.

► WHAT TO AVOID

Do not rely solely on a passive treatment approach. Isolated joint manipulation alone will rarely solve the problem. Patients who actively participate in their treatment plan tend to recover more quickly. As soon as you feel better and the pain is well under control, introduce light exercise based on your tolerance.

Avoid prolonged static positions such as sitting in a chair with your legs extended. This position may be comfortable in the short term, but it greatly increases tension on the sciatic nerve and may prolong its irritation.
