



# Wellness News Network™

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## Chiropractic Care for Sciatica

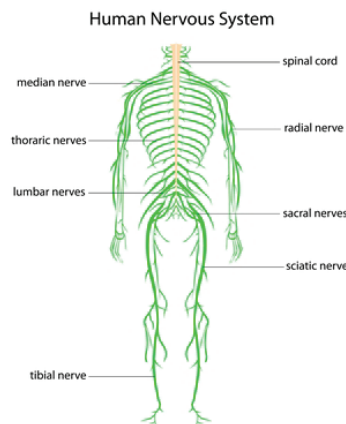
### Presented by: Introduction

Sciatica is a general term that describes several possible symptoms in your lower back, hip and leg caused by sciatic nerve dysfunction, including pain that radiates down your leg, decreased sensation in your lower extremity and leg weakness. Sciatica is a set of symptoms caused by compression or irritation of certain spinal nerve roots - branches of your spinal cord that exit your spine through gaps between your vertebrae. Sciatic nerve pain is a symptom of an underlying health problem, not a medical diagnosis and it is most likely to occur in people between the ages of 30 and 50 years, notes the *American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons*.<sup>1</sup> Your chiropractor is a musculoskeletal health expert who can diagnose the underlying cause of your sciatic nerve pain and offer relevant treatment options to help restore your health.

### About Your Sciatic Nerve

Your sciatic nerve is the longest and widest nerve in your body and it bears a strong resemblance to a lamp cord. You have two sciatic nerves: one on each side of your body. Your sciatic nerve begins in your lower back and runs through your buttock and down your leg to your foot.

This nerve innervates, or enlivens, the skin of your leg and your thigh, lower leg and foot muscles, respectively. Sciatic nerve pain varies considerably, depending on the cause and it may feel like a dull ache, mild tingling or a burning sensation, notes PubMed Health.<sup>2</sup> In severe cases, sciatic nerve pain may be debilitating. Sciatic nerve pain may be most apparent and severe at night, after prolonged periods of sitting or standing and after you cough, sneeze, or laugh.



### Possible Causes of Sciatic Nerve Pain

Possible causes of sciatic nerve pain are divided into two categories: the relatively common and the relatively rare. Relatively common causes of sciatic nerve pain include lumbar spine disc herniations (i.e., compression or irritation of a spinal nerve root by a portion of one of the intervertebral

**QUESTION:**  
Which is NOT a symptom of sciatic nerve pain?

- A) tingling
- B) headache
- C) burning sensation
- D) dull ache

**ANSWER:**  
B) headache

**QUESTION:**  
What are some of the common causes of sciatica?

- A) lumbar spine disc herniations
- B) tumor
- C) pregnancy
- D) infection

**ANSWER:**  
A) & C) only  
B) & D) are symptoms of rare causes

**TRUE OR FALSE:**  
The sciatic nerve begins in the middle of the back

**ANSWER:**  
False – lower back

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discs in your lumbar spine), degenerative disc disease, spinal stenosis (i.e., an abnormal narrowing of your spinal canal caused by bone spurs or other factors), piriformis syndrome, sacroiliac joint dysfunction, pregnancy and spondylolisthesis. Spondylolisthesis is a disorder in which one vertebra slides forward over an adjacent vertebra and it may be caused by congenital factors, trauma, or physical stress.

Relatively rare causes of sciatic nerve pain and dysfunction include spinal tumors, infection and cauda equina syndrome – a condition caused by compression, trauma or damage to the mass of nerves situated at the base of your spinal cord. Spinal tumors are rare and may be benign or cancerous. If a tumor develops in your lumbar region, it may compress one of your spinal nerve roots and cause sciatic nerve dysfunction.

## How Chiropractic Care Can Help

Chiropractic is an often helpful therapeutic method in treating certain underlying causes of sciatic nerve pain and dysfunction, such as disc herniations, sacroiliac joint dysfunction, and piriformis syndrome - a condition that occurs when your sciatic nerve is compressed or irritated as it travels underneath or through your piriformis muscle in your gluteal region. Many of the rare causes of sciatic nerve pain require prompt medical attention and intervention. Your chiropractor can counsel you on the most appropriate course of action to safely and effectively resolve your sciatic nerve problem.

A 2006 study published in the *Spine Journal* notes that chiropractic joint manipulation is more effective than simulated spinal adjustments for relieving acute back pain in patients with sciatica caused by a protruding intervertebral disc.<sup>3</sup> Another study, published in the *Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics*, states that patients undergoing chiropractic treatment for chronic low back pain and sciatica may benefit from enhanced self-efficacy motivation, which leads to improved coping abilities and improved pain and disability outcomes.<sup>4</sup> Because there are many possible causes of sciatica, it is important to visit your chiropractor as soon as possible once you begin experiencing symptoms.



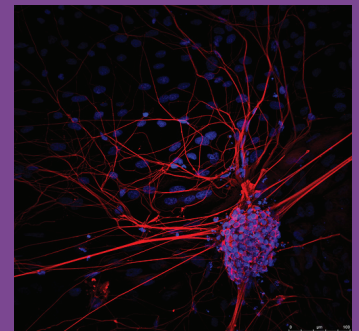
## Quote to Inspire

*"The first wealth is health."*

*- Ralph Waldo Emerson*

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4. Nyiendo J, Haas M, Goldberg B, Lloyd C. A descriptive study of medical and chiropractic patients with chronic low back pain and sciatica: Management by physicians (practice activities) and patients (self-management). *Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics*. 2001. Nov; 24(9): 543-551.



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