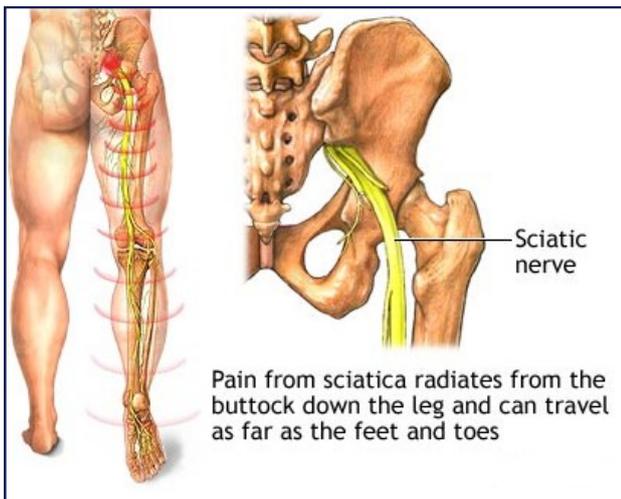


## “The causes of Sciatica and how to treat them”

**S**ciatica is a condition characterized by pain in the back of the thigh. The nature of this pain varies widely, from a prolonged, nagging ache to a sharp, agonizing pain with movement. Because of this variety, sciatica is often misdiagnosed.

Many sufferers of sciatica have been told they have a hamstring muscle tear or tightness. This misdiagnosis means that the injury can be very slow to respond to treatment, or that it recurs with only minor provocation. Thankfully, our understanding of the causes of sciatica means that treatment results are improving.

Your sciatic nerve is the main nerve that travels from your lower back to your leg. As shown in the picture, it travels through your buttock, and then down your thigh and into your foot. It branches off and becomes other nerves on the way. It is the longest nerve in your body.



Most people picture this nerve as a fine, delicate structure, like a thin piece of string or a strand of spider's web. In reality, the sciatic nerve is a tough and fibrous structure. It is about as thick as your little finger!

### Sciatica Symptoms

The pain of sciatica usually begins in your lower back, and spreads to the buttock, thigh, outside calf and occasionally your foot. Sciatica can also cause

- Burning, tingling or numbness in your leg
- Muscle weakness in your leg, feet or toes
- Pins and needles in your leg, feet or toes.
- Pain and stiffness during movement in either your leg or back.

### Common causes of Sciatica

The symptoms of sciatica are caused by irritation or pinching of your nerve, usually in the uppermost fibres that exit from your spine. Often the pressure arises from an injured disc in your lower back. In this case, the jelly-like substance inside your disc can bulge, or even burst out all together. In either of these cases, the pressure on the upper nerve fibres can cause pain and other symptoms.

Other causes of sciatica include

- Inflammation and swelling of the little joints in your back, known as *Facet joints*
- Compression of the nerve from bony arthritic growths in your lower spine.
- Compression of the nerve by a muscle in your bottom, called the *Piriformis*

As you can see, sciatica has many causes. All of these underlying problems have different sign and symptoms that will guide your physio in making the correct diagnosis.

Once you have the correct diagnosis, your treatment should be effective, meaning that the pain of sciatica will hopefully disappear quickly and permanently.

### Funny Thought for the Day

If you can start the day without caffeine; If you can always be cheerful ignoring aches and pains; If you can resist complaining and boring people with your troubles; If you can eat the same food every day and be grateful for it; If you can understand when your loved ones are too busy to give you any time; If you can take criticism and blame without resentment; If you can ignore a friend's limited education and never correct him; If you can face the world without lies and deceit; If you can conquer tension without medical help; If you can relax without liquor; if you can sleep without the aid of drugs .....then you are probably the family dog!