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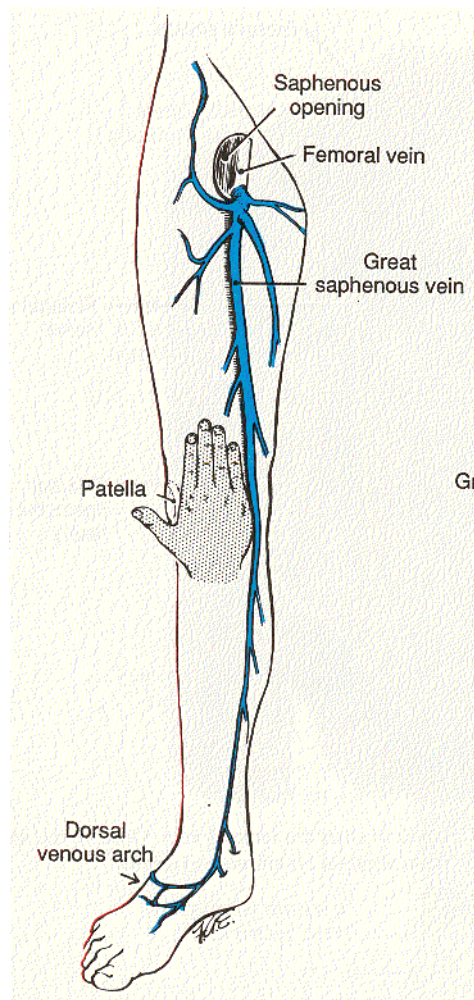
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*"treating the cause of your problem, not just the symptoms"*

## Take Lower Leg Pain Seriously

As of this month, I have been practicing chiropractic in Merritt for five full years. During that time, I have come across a few patients who were complaining of pain at the back of the lower leg. None of them could recall doing anything to their leg that might have injured it. One of them had a history of high blood pressure, smoking, and a relatively sedentary activity level while one or



two others seemed to live very healthy lifestyles.

As with any patient with a new complaint, they underwent a full examination. The most common cause of leg pain in my office is when one of the five nerves in the lower back is irritated or pinched. These nerves combine together to form the biggest nerve in the body called the “sciatic” nerve. The person could then experience “sciatica”, which simply means pain/numbness that refers down the leg wherever the sciatic nerve extends. Interestingly, these people did not appear to have anything wrong with their low back and the leg looked slightly swollen. The muscles in the lower leg were tested to see if there was any weakness or if it increased their pain –it made no difference. The only way their pain was reproduced was by feeling deep within the calf muscles or bending their ankle backwards so their toes pointed upwards. This made me think of another possibility. Although chiropractors are trained to recognize this other possible problem, it was not something that I could treat. Each of these patients was referred to their medical doctor for further tests. As suspected, each of them had a large blood clot in the deep lower leg veins. The blood in the veins is under less pressure and can form clots easier. The blood in the foot and ankle cannot travel back up the leg as well, resulting in swelling and pain. However, this was the least of these patients’ problems. If a small piece of the clot broke off, it would have traveled through the veins and back to the heart. From there it could have traveled to the lungs or even the brain. As a fragment travels down an artery, the size of the artery gets smaller and smaller. Eventually, the fragment will tightly plug a small artery and any body tissues that are dependent on that blood to keep it alive will die. This could have been a part of their brain or lung. Either way, the results are potentially deadly. Luckily, all three of these patients received proper and timely treatment that dissolved the blood clots and there was no serious complications.

The moral of the story is that if you get pain in the back of the calf for no apparent reason, don’t ignore it. Even if you think it is just an irritated nerve, have your chiropractor or medical doctor examine it.