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

More on Sciatica

Did you know that many of the small nerve roots that emerge from the spine in the low back area converge to become the sciatic nerve? This nerve then extends down the leg to supply the muscles and skin of the leg. Compression of one or more of the nerve roots can cause sciatica; pain that usually begins in the buttock area and extends down the back of the thigh and into the lower leg and foot. Most people who have suffered from sciatica claim that there is no pain as excruciating as sciatic nerve pain down the leg, and dread suffering a recurrence of these symptoms.

Many people do not realize that sciatica is not a disease or a condition, but a symptom of a disorder in the low back or pelvis resulting in spinal nerve compression. In my practice, the most common disorder that can cause sciatica is an injured and inflamed joint in the lumbar spine that irritates the neighbouring spinal nerve. The next most frequent cause is spasm of the "piriformis" muscle in the buttock region that compresses the sciatic nerve. Other spinal disorders that can cause sciatica include spondylolisthesis, a herniated disk, spinal stenosis, and trauma.

Now that you know what sciatica is and what are some of the causes, it is important to do what you can do to prevent it. Consider a few simple suggestions to help reduce sciatica or thwart its recurrence:

- Regular exercise helps to build and preserve a strong muscular core; specifically, target the muscles in the abdomen and low back. A strong core is essential for good posture and spinal alignment. Proper posture relieves pressure on the low back that contributes to sciatica.
- To reduce the risk of a lumbar disc herniation that can lead to sciatica, avoid movements that involve extreme body rotation.
- Try to keep body weight close to ideal.
- Choose seating that supports the spine's natural curve and allows the feet to rest flat on the floor. Avoid sitting for prolonged periods of time. Make it a point to get up and walk around often.
- Do not sit cross-legged. This places pressure on the sciatic nerve.
- Avoid sitting on a wallet kept in the hip pocket.

- Lifting and carrying things that are heavy, bulky or awkward in shape can contribute to sciatica. Remember to hold the item close to the body, lift with the back straight using the strong leg muscles.
- Feel a big sneeze or cough coming on - try to brace yourself first.
- Select a mattress and box spring that offers good support. When sleeping on your back, slip a pillow under the knees to help relieve low back pressure. People who prefer to sleep on their side should place a pillow between their knees to help reduce hip and low back pain.

Chiropractors are doctors who can determine what is causing sciatica. Once a diagnosis is made, a treatment plan is formulated and put into action to relieve sciatic nerve pain and related symptoms (numbness, tingling sensations). If you have symptoms similar to the ones described above, see your chiropractor for a professional opinion.