

## **Do You Have Pain in the Butt?**

Although chiropractors are well known for their successful treatment of neck pain, headaches, and back pain, there are many other problems that they successfully treat. A common one is a chronic dull ache in the buttock region. The pain is usually only on one side and feels like it is originating from deep within the muscles and soft tissues. The more a person sits, the worse it gets, and walking seems to help alleviate it temporarily. When left untreated, the pain and/or numbness can travel downward to the hip, thigh, and even the foot.

The clinical term for this problem is called “piriformis syndrome”. A small muscle (called the “piriformis”) is located underneath the large buttock muscles. When you sit on a hard surface, on your wallet that is in your back pocket, or sit on an uncomfortable chair for a prolonged period of time, the pressure seems to aggravate and make the muscle very tight. Doing activities that require repetitive rotation of the hip and leg outwards can also provoke the muscle to go into spasm. Unfortunately, the largest nerve in your body, called the “sciatic nerve”, is located directly underneath the piriformis muscle. When this muscle goes into spasm, the sciatic nerve can become irritated or pinched. This nerve originates in the low back, passes under the piriformis muscle as discussed and travels down the back and side of your leg until it ends at the bottom of your foot. It is responsible for controlling the sensation of pain, touch of the skin, and most of the muscles of your leg. If the pressure on the nerve is severe enough, pain and numbness will be felt in the same pattern as where the nerve travels.

If you have symptoms that are similar to the ones I have described, you may have piriformis syndrome. However, there are other possibly more severe causes of the same type of symptoms so see your chiropractor to be sure an accurate diagnosis is made. Next week, I will discuss the treatment of this problem and a simple stretch that will help prevent it in the first place.