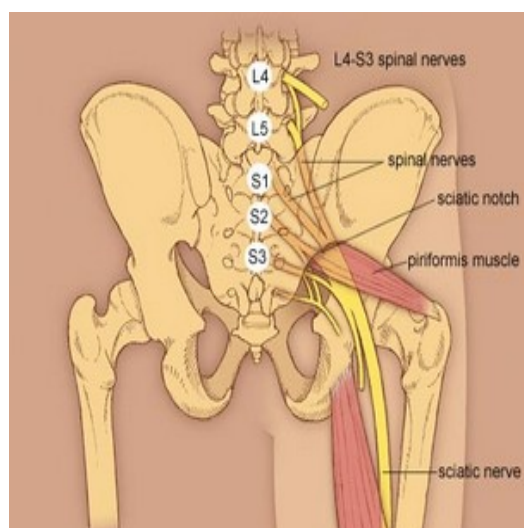
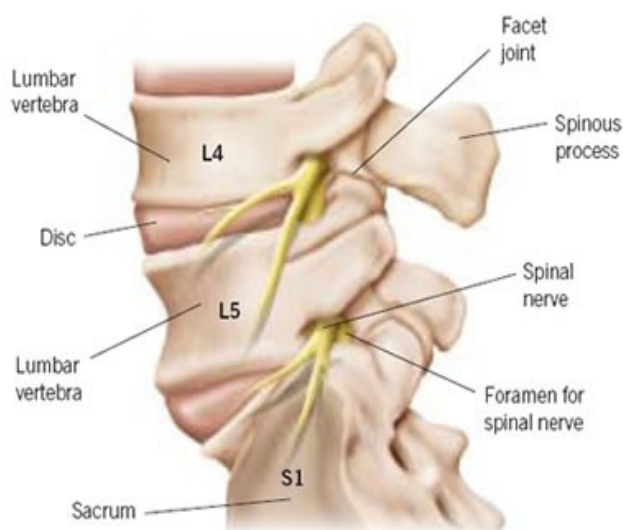


ADVICE SHEET FOR SCIATIC PAIN

WHAT IS SCIATIC PAIN

Sciatic pain or “sciatica” is one of the most commonly used terms to describe radiating pain or altered sensation which originates from the lower back and may be felt in the buttock, back of the leg and foot. Every nerve in your body stems from the spinal cord. In the case of the lower limbs, one major nerve, the sciatic nerve, originates from the lumbar spine and the sacrum as seen in the diagram below. More specifically, the sciatic nerve originates from the L4-S3 nerve roots.



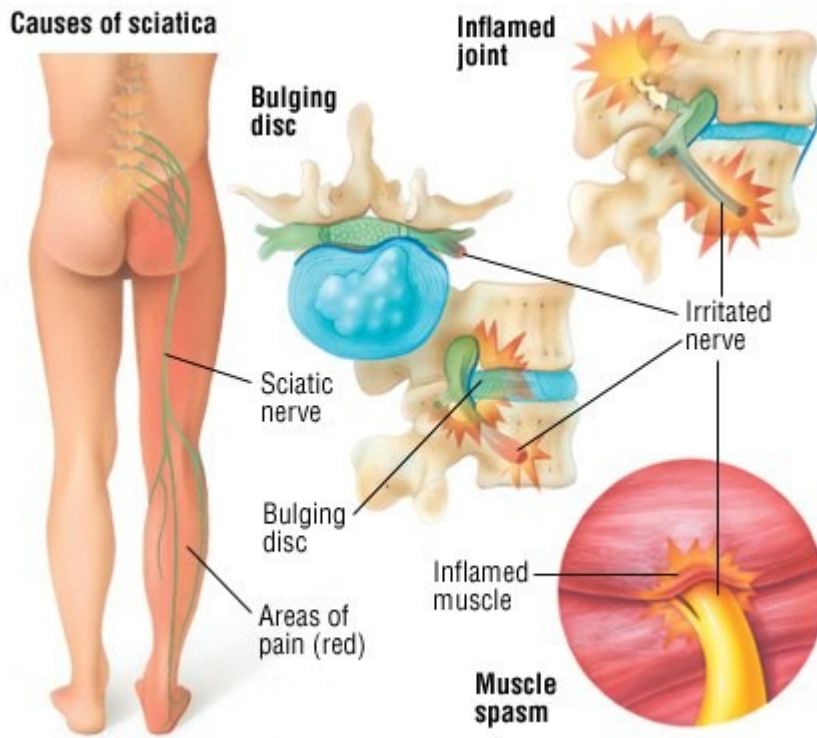
Interestingly, “sciatica” is not actually a medical diagnosis, but rather a symptom. It does not mean your sciatic nerve or your lower back is damaged, but rather that it has become sensitised and it does not mean you are now bound to living the rest of your life with a “bad back” or crippling leg pain.

WHAT CAUSES SCIATIC PAIN?

There are several different causes of sciatic pain which can be determined by your chartered physiotherapist upon initial assessment. Some common causes include:

- 1) Compression of the sciatic nerve by a lumbar disc bulge as the nerve exits the spinal cord
- 2) Irritation from the facet joints which join each vertebra to each other

3) Compression from the deep rotator muscles in your hip as the sciatic nerve passes beneath or through it.



SYMPTOMS OF LUMBAR DISC INJURY

- 1) Pain in the lower back, buttock, back of the leg and foot.
- 2) Tingling, burning or “pins and needles” in the back of the leg, down to the foot.
- 3) Lower limb weakness.

HOW TO LOOK AFTER IT AT HOME

- Most often, sciatic pain is secondary to lower back pain. It is important to keep moving to maintain the flexibility in your lower back. Go for regular short walks. Gentle walking in a pool can help reduce your symptoms.
- Always choose a chair that has good lower back support and avoid sitting with your legs outstretched in front of you. Don't sit for over 30 minutes at a time.
- A heat pack to the lower back can help reduce muscle tension.
- Avoid lifting heavy objects.
- Avoid spending time in a forward bent position.

PROFESSIONAL TREATMENT

It is recommended that you visit your nearest chartered physiotherapist to accurately assess and manage the issue. You will be provided with a specific home exercise programme which will allow you to return to your baseline level of activity. They may also do some manual therapy techniques to help reduce the pain.

PREVENTION

Your chartered physiotherapist will advise you on how you can reduce the likelihood of causing a sciatic pain. Common prevention methods include core and pelvic muscle strengthening.

IMPORTANT TAKE HOME MESSAGES

Your spine is a very, very strong structure that can withstand large forces and is designed to allow you to move freely. It is important to note that if you ever have low back and/or sciatic pain, that it more than likely is not a serious injury and in the vast majority of cases, will resolve with regular exercise and physiotherapy.