

Sciatica

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Situation: Sciatica is a term often used to describe pain that radiates down the back of the thigh, leg and foot.

Causes: Sciatica is more often a general, imprecise term used to describe any pain along the buttock, back of the thigh, and leg. Much like the term *headache* is used to describe migraines, sinus headaches, stress headaches, or the pain resulting from a blow to the head, *sciatica* is often used to describe where the pain is occurring rather than what's actually causing it. Most often, *sciatica* refers to irritations of the sciatic nerve by the nerves of the lower back feeding into the sciatic nerve and causing discomfort.

Actual sciatica occurs when the muscles responsible for rotation of the hip that lie deep below the gluteal muscles, irritate the sciatic nerve, which emerges from the bottom of your pelvis. The muscle most frequently involved in sciatica is the piriformis muscle. Because of the movement of the pelvic bones in the later stages of pregnancy, this condition is often associated with childbirth.

Symptoms: With true sciatica, the patient generally complains of pain deep in the buttocks, which is made worse by activities like sitting and climbing stairs. The pain often goes down the back of the thigh, leg and foot.

Treatment: Treatment options can include chiropractic care, massage, acupuncture and physical therapy. Your chiropractor will help diagnoses true sciatica or nerve root irritation from the lower back. The doctor might order testing such as an x-ray to confirm diagnosis. In rare cases a referral may be made if unresponsive to conservative care.