

5 Essential Exercises
for
Sciatica
&
Piriformis Syndrome

Sciatica and piriformis syndrome are similar in that they are both issues involving the sciatic nerve but they are also very different. There are many possible reasons for the onset of sciatic pain.

In many cases something is pressing on the sciatic nerve—most often a slipped or herniated disc. These are the discs that live in between the vertebrae of the spine, often referred to as intervertebral discs. These discs slip and degenerate for all different reasons.

First of all, genetics and imitation play a role. A family can have a bad back issue through many generations where the integrity of the spine is compromised. Discs also become damaged because of trauma. There's the trauma of an acute injury, like a car accident. There's also extended emotional trauma.

Our bodies remember everything, and we store tension in our muscles. A history of emotional trauma is going to affect the physical structure of the body. Our posture can contribute to poor bone alignment and poor muscle tone, both of which can lead to slipped discs. Diet and nutrition can also play a role in the development of our bodies, and health of the spine.

You could also be experiencing sciatica or sciatic pain from a bone pressing into the sciatic nerve. Certain conditions can lead to degeneration of the spine that may result in bone pressing onto the spinal column or the root of the sciatic nerve. Also, the nerves at the base of the spine are vulnerable.

The spinal cord stops growing in infancy, but the bones of the spine and rest of the body continue to grow. The spinal cord ends near the top of the lumbar spine and yet a bunch of exposed nerve roots continue the journey towards the lower extremities.

As a result of this, it becomes very easy for something to irritate one of these nerves.

In the case of piriformis syndrome, there is a muscle pressing on the sciatic nerve. The sciatic nerve actually forms directly in front of the piriformis muscle. So, if the piriformis muscle goes into spasm, then it will press on the sciatic nerve and create the same radiating pain that you'd get from a bone or disc pressing on the sciatic nerve. Muscles spasm for similar reasons – genetics, physical and emotional trauma, poor posture, diet and nutrition.

In all of these situations, whether it is muscle or bone or disc pressing on the sciatic nerve, the key to healing both sciatica and piriformis syndrome is to change your habits. Those with chronic pain have an immediate incentive to seek solutions in changing their habits. Others may have pain every so often, but they too should change their habits to prevent the situation from continuing or growing worse.

Perhaps you always seem to get injured in the same place or the same side. Maybe you've been to physical therapy that has been effectively only for the injury to recur again at a later date. Those who have had surgery should definitely examine their habits to create new, healthy patterns. Or perhaps you are not in pain but recognize these postural issues in yourself and know people in your life with sciatica.

For all of us, it is vital to our health and healing that we consider the nature of the ways in which we move, get injured, and recover. How you live, move, and care for yourself will determine the quality of your life.

ANKLE TO KNEE BACKWARDS



- Not everyone can get into this position. You can also do it with one leg straight and the bent leg ankle crosses over the straight leg knee.
- In a seated position, bend your knees and try to stack your right shin on top of the left. Your right foot should be on your left knee and your right knee should hover or lay flat above your left foot. When you look down between your legs, you should see an even triangle of space between your pelvis and your shins.
- You can loosely belt the legs in a way that doesn't pull them closer to each other but also won't let them separate any further.
- Begin to lean backwards slowly keeping an arch in your lower back. You have to keep the natural arch of the back even if you can only go a few inches. You can go down as far as your forearms, trying to relax and allow the right inner and outer thigh to release passively with each breath.

CLAM SHELLS



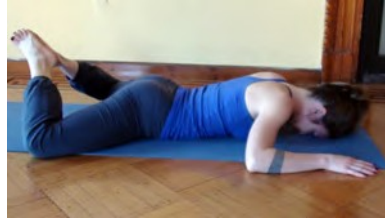
- Start by lying on your left side, with your knees bent and the right leg on top of the left with the feet together.
- Maintain a neutral spine, engaging your abdominals if you need to.
- Stack the hips and don't let the top hip move backwards. You can even cheat the top hip forward. It is important to differentiate between the leg and the pelvis and not let them move in the same direction.
- From this position, raise your knee slowly engaging gluteus medius. Keep the pelvis and trunk stable. Hold the top position for 5 seconds.
- Lower slowly for five seconds.
- Another option is to raise the top knee slowly, hold for five seconds and then lower slowly only about half way maintaining an active muscle.
- You want to activate gluteus medius and any way that happens for you is the best way.

NERVE FLOSSING



- Sit in a chair with the feet flat on the floor.
- Tuck the chin into the chest and flex the leg under the chair.
- Look up towards the ceiling and straighten the leg while flexing the foot
- Lower the leg and repeat.
- Do this fifteen to twenty times.

FROG BELLY



- Lay on your stomach. Bend your knees wide out to the side, bringing the soles of the feet together in mid-air.
- The hip bones of the pelvis should be on the floor determining the height of the feet.
- They might be high off the floor. That indicates tight hips. If the feet flop to the floor you might be too loose.
- Draw the knees as high and wide as possible.
- You might feel this in a number of places but often it is the in top of the quadriceps at where the leg meets the pelvis.

ANKLE OVER KNEE AT WALL



Lay flat on your back with your knees bent and your toes at the base of a wall.

- Cross the right ankle over the left knee. Flex the right foot.
- Keep your lower back naturally arched a tiny bit off of the floor.
- Draw the left knee towards your chest and place your left foot on the wall
- Try your best to keep your right shin parallel to the chest while still reaching your tailbone down to the floor and your shoulders relaxed down on the floor.
- Stay for as long as ten minutes.
- Change sides.