


## SELF-CARE INFORMATION ON SCIATICA

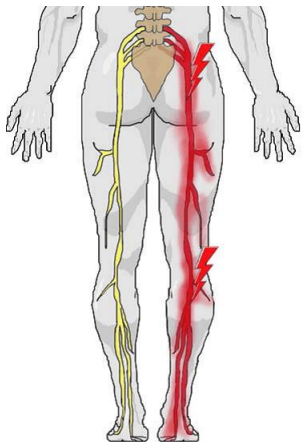
### What is Sciatica?

Sciatica is pain, tingling, or numbness produced by an irritation or inflammation of the nerve roots that lead to the sciatic nerve. The sciatic nerve is formed by the nerve roots coming out of the spinal cord into the lower back. It goes down through the buttock, then its branches extend down the back of the leg to the ankle and foot. Sciatic nerve pain is simply caused by pressure being placed on the sciatic nerve. Most of the time the cause is not serious and in most cases a scan is not necessary and would not change how your symptoms are managed



### SYMPTOMS OF SCIATICA

- ✓ Constant or intermittent pain on one side of the low back and/or lower body
- ✓ Pain may be sharp, shooting or burning
- ✓ Pain that radiates to the buttock, thigh or lower leg
- ✓ Tingling and numbness anywhere along the path of the sciatic nerve
- ✓ Feelings of weakness or heaviness in the affected leg
- ✓ Pain that changes in intensity with changes in body position



### Diagnosis

Diagnosis of sciatica is based on your symptoms and assessment findings.

## How to help your pain

- Stand up! Too much sitting causes the hip flexors to become tight. Set a timer on your computer or phone to remind you every 30-60 minutes. Even if moving hurts, it's not harmful and will help you get better quicker
- Try to keep hydrated at all times.
- In most cases sciatica will resolve in 6-12 weeks but may last longer.
- Try to keep active and continue with your normal activities as much as possible.
- Start gentle exercise as soon as you can. Any exercise that gets you moving is good, so try to do something you enjoy. Remember to practise regularly and gradually increase the amount you do
- Take pain relief if necessary to help you continue with your usual activities. Speak to a Pharmacist for further advice. Sometimes if your leg pain is severe, your GP may prescribe some nerve pain modulating medication that may help.

## Sciatica stretches and exercises

Remember general exercise is the most helpful way to ease your symptoms. However, sometimes doing some simple stretching exercises can help you feel more confident to move. Start with a few repetitions and increase as you feel able.

### 1. Piriformis Super Stretch



Hold 3-5 sec; repeat 5-8 times; Perform at least once per day.

Begin in the hand and knees position, if you have sciatica on the right, rotate both legs to the left and extend your left leg straight back, if you have sciatica on your left, rotate both to the right and extend your right leg straight back. Slowly lower your trunk down as far as you comfortably can.

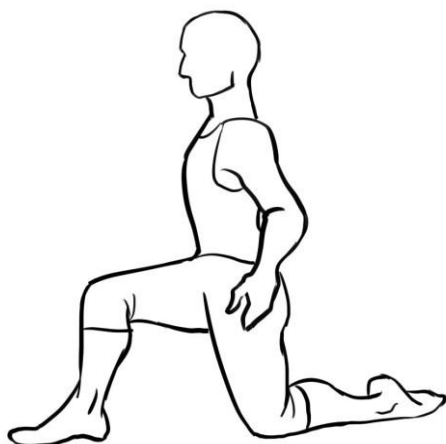
### 2. Lying Glute Stretch



Hold for 3-5 sec, repeat 5-8 times; both sides; perform at least once per day.

Begin lying on your back, cross one leg over the opposite knee and slowly bring the foot that is still on the floor up and towards your chest. When it is close enough, grab your knee from under the leg that is crossed on both sides with both hands. Slowly come out of the stretch and repeat.

### **3. Hip Flexor Exercise**



Repeat 10-15 times on both sides; Perform at least once per day...

Begin standing, placing one foot comfortably in front of you, shoulder width apart, holding on to a chair or rail for support. Slowly bend both legs lowering the back knee to the ground. All the work will be done on the front leg so be sure to perform this exercise on both sides. Slowly come out of the stance and repeat. Hold for just a moment in the up and down positions.

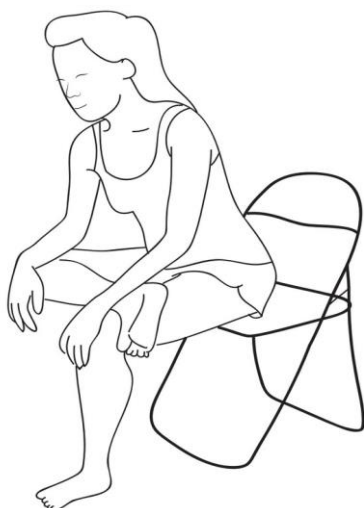
### **4. Lying Outer Hip Stretch**



Hold 3-5 sec; repeat 5-8 times; perform at least once per day.

Begin on your back knees bent. Take the affected leg and bring it over the non-affected leg, keeping shoulders on the ground, applying gentle downward pressure to the knee, allowing the hip to stretch as much as you comfortably can.

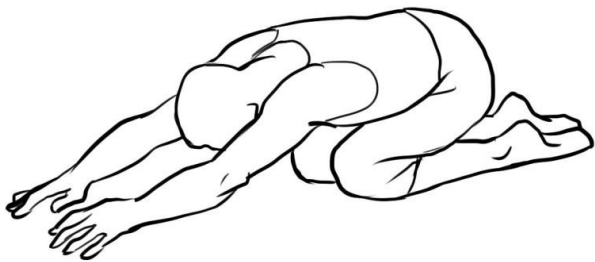
### **5. Seated Figure Four Stretch**



Hold for 3-5 sec, repeat 5-8 times; per-form at least once per day.

Begin sitting. Bring the affected leg up and over the opposite knee. Once in that position, stabilize the bent leg with both hands one hand on the foot keeping the leg in position then push down on the knee of the bent legs with the other hand while at the same time leaning your trunk forward. Only go as far as you comfortably can, come out of the stretch and re-peat, only on the affected side.

## 6. Child's Pose



Hold for 3-5 sec, repeat 5-8 times; perform at least once per day.

Begin in a kneeling position. Drop your butt toward your heels as you stretch the rest of your body down and forward.

In the fully stretched position, rest your arms in a relaxed position along the floor, rest your stomach comfortably on top of your thighs. You should feel a mild stretch in your shoulders and buttocks and down the length of your spine and arms. Don't force your derriere to move any close to your heels than is comfortable.

### Consult your GP or Physiotherapist if:

- Your leg pain is worsening and not manageable
- You experience muscle weakness in one or both legs which affects your walking
- You develop pain, numbness or pins and needles into both legs

### When to seek urgent medical attention (A&E):

Although very rare if you experience any of the following symptoms you must seek urgent medical attention

- Difficulty passing urine
- Numbness or tingling in your genital region, back passage, or buttocks
- Loss of control of your bladder or bowel
- Impaired sexual function: such as loss of feeling during intercourse or a change in ability to achieve an erection
- Loss of sensation when passing urine or during a bowel movement

### Useful contacts

- Ask your pharmacist
- Patient UK - [www.patient.co.uk](http://www.patient.co.uk)
- NHS Choices, [www.nhs.uk/conditions/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/)

### If you have further questions:

Call the **practice** on 01285 653184 or 01285 653122

If you require **urgent** medical advice, call 111 (24 Hrs)

In an **emergency** call **999**