

Understanding Back Pain

McGOVERN
PHYSICAL THERAPY ASSOCIATES

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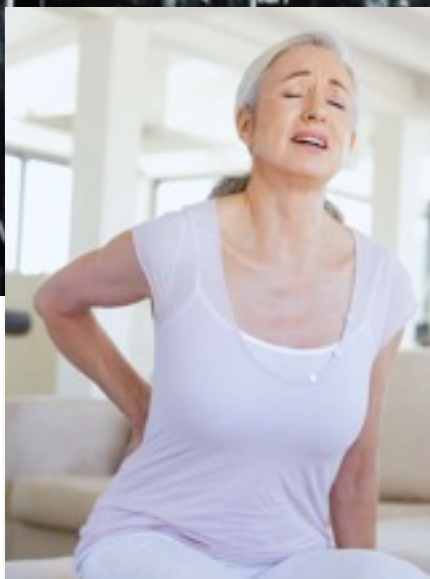
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Standing Up To Sciatica

Sciatica is a relatively

common form of leg pain that is often misunderstood by sufferers. It is a condition so widespread that many people think they can self-treat it or just follow another person's advice for how to relieve the pain. There are frequent misconceptions about what the term sciatica means, why sciatica occurs and how to find relief from the low back pain and leg pain. Contrary to what many people believe, sciatica is actually a set of symptoms rather than a diagnosis for what is causing the pain. Especially for more severe cases, the cause of the low back pain and leg pain needs to be correctly addressed in order to relieve discomfort.

Recent studies show that nearly 1 million of MRIs done for sciatica fail to find a treatable cause. With a new imaging technique called magnetic resonance neurography, 69% of the patients were found to have entrapment of the sciatic nerve deep in the buttock by the piriformis muscle. It is known that in about 25% of the general population, the sciatic nerve pierces the piriformis muscle and can be susceptible to irritation and entrapment when that muscle and others become overworked and tired. This can lead to piriformis syndrome, which is the most common cause of sciatica. It responds best to conservative cost effective measures, especially physical therapy. Physical therapy should be tried first to relieve the nerve entrapment and relieve the symptoms.

The spine has to bear the weight of our trunk, and at the bottom of the spinal column is the sciatic nerve. If there are changes in posture, muscle strength, and pelvic alignment through which it passes, the nerve is compressed which leads to the quite common low back and sciatic nerve pains. In some instances, this nerve, which is the longest and largest nerve that reaches down to the foot, is pressed at other points. The consequent ache can therefore be felt anywhere from the base of the spine, the buttocks, and the back of the thigh and legs. Even tingling sensations in the toes can be attributed at times to the impingement of the sciatic nerve.

Bad Habits Can Effect Your Pain:

Some seemingly harmless habits you may have can also contribute to the irritation of the sciatic nerve. A frequent bad habit is crossing of the legs for extended periods which puts pressure on the nerve. Although not usually painful, you may still experience discomfort from momentary numbness of your limbs and the tingling sensations on your toes and legs.

You may find increased pain with having to sit or stand for a long periods. It is possible for you to prevent experiencing some sciatic pains and posture definitely has a direct impact on the development or aggravation of sciatic pains.

The Important Role Of Physical Therapy:

With manual physical therapy, specific exercises, and muscle re-training, you can correct posture and lessen the stress on the lumbar area of your spine minimizing the occurrence of this ailment. Physical therapists play a crucial role in evaluating and treating sciatica and other common back problems. Our physical therapists are musculoskeletal experts and have years of

training to evaluate your back and find the root cause of your sciatica. A thorough and individualized treatment plan is created to guide you through the recovery process and maximize your success.

When coming to therapy at McGovern Physical Therapy Associates, there are specific and easy exercises that you will be trained on to relieve the tension in your back and legs. Hands on therapy can help to gently loosen tightened soft tissue and joints in your spine so they move properly. In addition, modalities such as ultrasound and electrical stimulation can help with pain control so that you can start to feel like yourself again. Knowing all this should give you a head start in warding off this painful affliction. After all, it may be as simple as learning to stand tall.

Journal of neurosurgery: Spine Feb, 2005 Volume 2, Number 2. Aaron G. Filler, M.D., Ph.D., Jodean Haynes, B.A., Sheldon E. Jordan, M.D., Joshua Prager, M.D., J. Pablo Villablanca, M.D., Keyvan Farahani, Ph.D., Duncan Q. McBride, M.D., Jay S. Tsuruda, M.D., Brannon Morisoli, B.A., Ulrich Batzdorf, M.D., and J. Patrick Johnson, M.D.

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Your Best *Defense*

Against Back Pain

Mechanical low back pain (LBP) is one of the most common patient complaints expressed to emergency physicians in the United States accounting for more than 6 million cases annually. Approximately two thirds of adults are affected by mechanical low back pain at some point in their lives, making it the second most common complaint. Mechanical means the source of the pain may be in the spinal joints, discs, vertebrae or soft tissues. Of all cases of mechanical LBP, 70% are due to lumbar strain or sprain, 10% are due to age-related degenerative changes in discs and facets, 4% are due to herniated discs, 4% are due to compression fractures caused by osteoporosis, and 3% are due to spinal stenosis.

Generally the source of pain is in the spine and/or its supporting structure. The surrounding muscles and ligaments may become inflamed and irritated causing most people to experience pain primarily in the lower back. However, the pain may spread to the buttocks, thighs or knees. Many people may also experience spasms with mechanical back pain. The symptoms are generally more noticeable with bending of the back and when lifting heavy objects.

Physical therapy is the natural way of helping your body recover from back pain. At McGovern Physical Therapy Associates, your spine is extensively evaluated by an expert physical therapist who has years of training in medical evaluation of musculoskeletal and back conditions.

Your physical therapist then addresses the root cause of your pain. The treatment plan may include modalities to relieve pain, specialized gentle manual therapy to increase soft tissue and joint mobility, and specific spinal exercises to rebuild your spinal strength.

The prognosis for complete recovery is excellent. Most people with acute mechanical back pain respond very rapidly to treatment. However, studies show that without proper recovery and treatment such as physical therapy, there is a much higher possibility of re-injury to the low back because of lasting weakness or poor spinal muscle control.

The key to a great recovery is a customized treatment plan just for you. We believe it is important to help patients understand their injuries and learn how to prevent future occurrences. Thus, we customize therapy and exercises to compliment ability level and lifestyle. Our ultimate goal is to provide treatment and education that enables our patients to perform at their highest level at home or in the office.

Exercise Essentials

Exercises For Back Pain

Flexibility, strength, and stability are needed for good back health. Try these exercises to help maintain your back in good health. Share this with a friend or family member to help keep their back healthy too!

SINGLE KNEE TO CHEST STRETCH

While lying on your back, hold your knee and gently pull it up towards your chest.



PELVIC TILT

While lying on your back, use your stomach muscles to press your back into the floor.



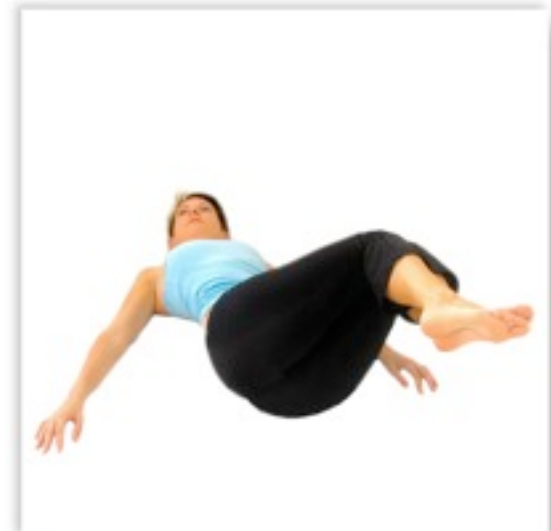
HAMSTRING STRETCH

While lying on your back, raise up your leg and hold the back of your knee until a stretch is felt.



LOWER TRUNK ROTATIONS

While lying on your back with your knees bent, lift up both feet and slowly rock your pelvis to the side. Then slowly rock to the other side. Maintain your spine straight for the entire exercise.



Always consult your physical therapist or physician before starting exercises you are unsure of doing.



Exercises copyright of HEP2GO
www.HEP2GO.com
Free Home Rehab Exercise Program

SUCCESSSES

What patients are saying...

"I came to MPTA for an existing pain in my mid and lower back. Since I started here, I have been able to recognize how to deal with my back problems before the pain starts. I want to thank everyone here for getting me back on track." - *Isabella R.*

"McGovern has great physical therapists and staff. I came to the program very skeptical and left knowing that my injury was gone. Thank you so much to everyone who assisted me in my recovery." - *Adriana A.*

"This was my first experience with PT. It was truly a wonderful experience. From the front-desk staff who are accommodating to the therapists who are knowledgeable and fun to work with. I feel much better physically and feel that the staff really cared about me." - *Joseph H.*

"I have to say that my experience at McGovern was great. Not only did the treatment that I received help me, but the attitudes and kindness of the staff made it easier for me to understand my pain and what is going on with my body. I want to thank everyone for their kindness. It was a wonderful experience and I feel good. I would definitely recommend McGovern to anyone." - *Mary I.*

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Are You Fed Up With *Back Pain?*

As experts in relieving pain, improving mobility, maximizing physical functionality and preventing future injuries, **McGovern Physical Therapy Associates** addresses the root cause of your back problem rather than merely treating the symptoms. This results in long lasting relief and a better quality of life.

If you are suffering with back pain or back related issues there is help. Our **FIT FOR BACK** program will improve mobility; reduce pain; increase strength, and improve coordination and balance. What makes the **FIT FOR BACK** program so valuable is that the examination will help identify the cause of the back pain. If we know the cause of your injury it makes the solution to your back problems much easier. One action you must take with your back problem is to start today on the road to recovery. One thing is for sure: the issue that is causing pain will not stay the same; if left un-treated, it will get worse!

McGovern Physical Therapy Associates'

FIT FOR BACK PROGRAM will help you:

- **Decrease Pain**
- **Increase range of motion and strength**
- **Increase activity tolerance**
- **Increased flexibility**
- **Improve your health**
- **Increase your understanding about prevention**
- **and enjoy your life!**

In addition to our highly successful Fit for Back Program, we can help you if you are suffering from pain, aches or stiffness. Call one of our convenient locations near you for a **free consultation** and begin a life of better sleep, work and play!

McGovern Physical Therapy Associates can help resolve your:

- **Arthritis**
- **Sports injuries**
- **Back, Neck, Shoulder & Arm Pain**
- **Chronic Pain**
- **Foot, Leg, Ankle & Hip Pain**
- **Fractures**
- **Functional Problems**
- **Gait Deviation**
- **Golf Performance Program**
- **Headaches**
- **Osteoporosis**
- **Poor Posture**
- **Pre & Postsurgical Rehabilitation**
- **Upper & Lower Extremity Pain**
- **Women's Health Issues**
- **Work/Industrial Injuries**

Who would benefit from a Physical Therapy Consultation?

- Anyone suffering from pain, weakness, stiffness, or restricted range of motion.
- Anyone experiencing balance issues while walking or running.
- Anyone unable to enjoy or participate in activities due to physical limitations.
- Anyone ready to take a proactive step to improve their overall health and lifestyle.

What is a Physical Therapy Consultation?

A Physical Therapy Consultation is a one-on-one meeting with a highly trained physical therapist. The physical therapist will assess your physical concerns and recommend a course of action to address, and perhaps, eliminate your pain and/or limitations.



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