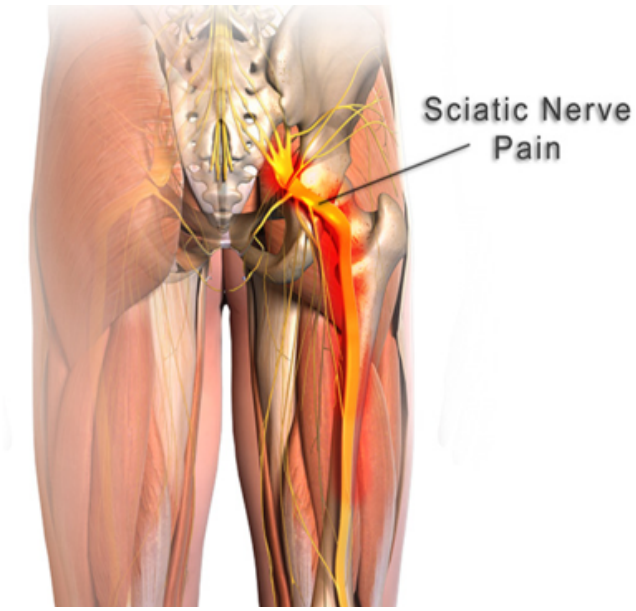
SCIATICA

WHAT IS SCIATICA?

Sciatica is an issue our physios diagnose and treat on a regular basis at our Physio-Wise clinics. It's a term used to describe pain down the leg, which can extend from the buttock region all the way to the foot.



CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

- excessive or inappropriate activity
- poor lifting technique
- muscle weakness
- muscle tightness
- joint tightness in the lower back
- poor posture
- a history of lower back injuries

CAUSES

Primarily it's caused by irritation to the sciatic nerve where it exits the lower back. This can be due to a herniated disc, locked facet joints or bony arthritic growths. The symptoms can also be influenced by muscular tightness deep within the buttocks. One of these muscles commonly at the source of sciatica like symptoms is the piriformis. Your physiotherapist may mention a condition called piriformis syndrome, which is like sciatica but the pain is often more at the hip, and the primary cause is the tight piriformis muscle, compared to those previously mentioned.

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

Symptoms can include some or all the following:

- Pain from the back/hip region which can extend the full distance from the back of the leg to the foot.
- Burning or tingling down the leg
- Numbness, weakness or difficulty moving the leg and/or foot
- Difficulty standing up or sitting due to the above symptoms

TREATMENT

- soft tissue massage around the lower back, buttocks and occasionally the lower limb
- development of a home exercise plan
- joint mobilization
- dry needling/acupuncture
- Shock Wave Therapy
- ice or heat treatment
- electrotherapy
- progressive exercises to improve flexibility, strength & posture
- education
- anti-inflammatory advice

COMMON EXERCISES

Lift straight leg using a towel and pull down on foot. Hold 20 secs

With effected leg on top, pull opposite leg towards chest until a stretch is felt around effected hip. Hold 30 secs

Bring knees to chest and hold 10 secs, lower and repeat

Laying on your back, rock knees from side to side slowly. Repeat 10 times