



DeMaio Family Chiropractic & Physical Therapy

*Aligning Your Body's
Health & Well-being
... since 1990*

Chiropractors routinely diagnose and successfully treat leg pain associated with inflammation of the sciatic nerve, commonly called sciatica. Although sciatica is a relatively common form of low back pain and leg pain, the true meaning of the term is often misunderstood. Sciatica is a set of symptoms rather than a diagnosis for what is irritating the root of the nerve, causing the pain. This point is important, because treatment for sciatica or sciatic symptoms will often be different, depending upon the underlying cause of the symptoms.

The sciatic nerve is the largest and longest nerve in the body. About the thickness of a person's thumb, it spans from the lower back to the foot. The nerve originates in the lower part of the spinal cord, the so-called lumbar region. As it branches off from the spinal cord, it passes between the bony vertebrae (the component bones of the spine) and runs through the pelvic girdle, or hip bones. The nerve passes through the hip joint and continues down the back of the leg to the foot.

The goal of chiropractic care in treating sciatica is to optimize motion in the spine, treat the spinal discs, reduce muscle spasm, and improve muscular strength.

Sciatica is a fairly common disorder and approximately 40% of the population experiences it at some point in their lives. However, only about 1% have coexisting sensory or motor deficits. Sciatic pain has several root causes and treatment may hinge upon the underlying problem. DeMaio Family Chiropractic will be evaluating four major causes of sciatica:

Disc Herniation and Tearing: It's important to rule out a herniated disc or tears in the disc as the cause of sciatic pain, a condition known as sciatic neuritis.

Spinal Stenosis: Another common cause of sciatica is spinal stenosis, a chronic narrowing of the bony canal or the spinal column, both of which can trigger nerve inflammation.

Lumbar Facet Syndrome: Facet joints can degenerate and go through arthritic changes. Degeneration of the facet joints can significantly contribute to sciatic nerve inflammation. A diagnosis of facet syndrome as the cause of sciatica will determine a treatment program of gentle chiropractic manipulation, sometimes including flexion-distraction protocol, and manual therapies especially suited for facet sprain.

Nerve Entrapment Syndromes: Mechanical imbalances in the spine and pelvis, disc degeneration without herniation, and spinal joint restrictions (subluxations) can lead to muscular tightness (hypertonicity) that can cause "entrapment" (or trapping) of the sciatic nerve. Specific muscle techniques that address the piriformis muscle are used in chiropractic practice to treat sciatic nerve entrapment. Chiropractors utilize manual and muscle therapies, spinal manipulation, pelvic blocking, and other approaches to correct mechanical imbalances that contribute to entrapment.

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