Everything You Need to Know about Sciatic Nerve Pain – Yoga Exercises for Relief

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Sometimes, a sudden sharp pain shooting down your leg causes you so much discomfort, that you are left reeling. This kind of pain is often known as sciatica nerve pain. To elaborate further, the term Sciatica is used to describe the symptoms of various kinds of leg pain like tingling, numbness, or weakness, which shoot down the lower back via a nerve called the sciatic nerve in the rear portion of the leg.

Sciatica, also known as radiculopathy, is a culmination of symptoms and not a diagnosis. The causes of sciatica pain can be a spondylolisthesis, herniated disc degenerative disc disease, and spinal stenosis.

Why do You Get Sciatica

Sciatica can also be caused by a small but significant muscle which lies deep within your hip, known as the piriformis. The piriformis muscle is one of a few small deep hip rotators generally used to turn your thigh outwards.
It also helps extend your hip when you walk and abduct the thigh that takes it outwards, when your hip is flexed. The sciatic nerve is found between the piriformis muscle and other small hard tendons that lie against the bone of the pelvic bone and sacrum. If the piriformis is taut, it exerts pressure on the sciatic nerve and shoves against the tendons beneath it, which can cause unbearable pain.

**Characteristics of Sciatica Nerve Pain**

You might suffer from intermittent shafts of intense pain, but how can you be absolutely sure that you are suffering from sciatica pain?

If you suffer from one or more of the following symptoms, you will be able to conclude the precisenature of your leg pain.

- Consistent pain in only one side of the leg or buttock. The pain is usually not found in both legs.
- The pain increases when you sit.
- The description of the leg pain varies from burning, searing, or a tingling pain, never a dull ache.
- A feeling of numbness, weakness and real difficulty in mobilizing the leg, foot and/or toes.
- A sudden shooting pain that may make it challenging for you to walk.
- A pain that oscillates down the leg and the foot and toes. This pain usually does not stay in one place.

When do you get Sciatica?

Sciatica rarely affects the young; it can affect you when you are in your forties and fifties. You will not end up with sciatica from a sudden injury, the condition actually takes time to develop. A large number of people get relief from sciatica with the help of non-surgical treatment within a very short time. But for others, the pain can be really tough to get rid of. It might prove too severe and debilitating to bear. If you are suffering from debilitating pain, you need to consult a doctor for further treatment and also to find out whether there is any underlying serious medical issue.

When is Sciatica Regarded as Serious?

Some symptoms of sciatica respond well to non-surgical treatment. But in few other cases, the pain becomes unbearable, which needs immediate medical attention and sometimes even surgery. These include progressive neurological symptoms like leg weakness and/or bladder or bowel dysfunction. Spinal tumors can also cause sharp and intense pain.
Sciatica pain cannot be treated just by addressing the symptoms. To get relief, the underlying reason of the condition has to be addressed. The usual treatment options available for sciatica are self-care or non-surgical care, but for unendurable pain, surgical intervention is the only option.

Non-surgical Treatment Options

The debilitating condition of sciatica can cast a pall of gloom on your life. Since movement is severely restricted, you try in vain to find effective solutions. When over the counter medicines fail to give relief from the symptoms, we seek solace in alternative therapies like chiropractic care, acupuncture and so on.

We will discuss each of these practices and find out how these alternative therapies can give us considerable relief from the searing pain.

What is chiropractic care? In chiropractic care, the practitioner uses his hands to incite spinal manipulation and other alternative treatments.
The theory behind Chiropractic care is that the right alignment of the body’s musculoskeletal structure, chiefly the spine, will help the body heal itself without the need of surgery and medication. The technique of manipulation is used to provide mobility to joints. The mobility of joints is often hindered by tissue injury, mostly caused by a traumatic event; for example, falling, or continuous stress caused by sitting without proper back support.

A Chiropractor examines the patient with care and analyses his/her medical history to find out the reason behind the patient’s sciatica pain.

Chiropractic treatment is largely based on the principle that inadequate spinal movement is the chief cause of pain and reduced function. Chiropractic care offers an alternative therapy to conventional treatment. It is a non-invasive and completely drug-free treatment.

The Sciatica Treatments Used by Chiropractors are the following,

- Ice/Cold Therapy brings down inflammation and helps to control sciatic pain.

- Ultrasound is another technique which Chiropractors use. It provides gentle heat, and the sound waves created penetrate deep into the tissues. It stimulates circulation and helps with muscle spasms, cramping, stiffness, swelling, and pain.

- Adjustments or Spinal Manipulations-Spinal manipulations are at the core of Chiropractic care. Proper manipulation of the spine loosens the restricted movement of the spine. It also helps to reposition the misaligned vertebral bodies.

- Adjustment techniques differ, ranging from a swift high-velocity thrust to gentle force and minimal pressure.

One needs to master the Chiropractic technique, in order to display great skill and precision. Spinal manipulation is the one treatment that sets apart chiropractic care from other medical practices.

**Acupuncture to the Aid of Sciatica**

Acupuncture is a complementary medical practice that involves stimulating certain points on the body, most often with the help of a needle penetrating the skin, to provide relief from pain or to help treat other health conditions.
There is ample research to prove that acupuncture can provide a great deal of relief to patients suffering from sciatica.

Acupuncture can help relieve back pain and sciatica by inserting small needles into specific sites on the body; the needles prompt a response from the nervous system.

- It stimulates nerves located in muscles and other tissues, which enables the release of endorphins and other neurohumoral factors, which then transforms the processing of pain in the brain and spinal cord.
- It reduces inflammation, with the release of vascular and immunomodulatory factors.
- Acupuncture also improves muscle stiffness and joint mobility, enhancing the local microcirculation to help in the dispersal of swelling.

How Massage Helps with Sciatica

Whether you’ve been suffering from sciatica pain for ages, or have just started feeling the pinch of acute sciatica pain, massage can effectively provide relief either way.

The reason that you suffer from sciatica pain is because sciatic nerve roots found in your lower back get inflamed or irritated.
Massage therapy aids in relief from sciatic nerve pain in 2 ways:

- The taut lower back muscles can put stress on your nerve roots. Massage therapy loosens these muscles and provides great relief from pinching or irritation.
- A massage also stimulates the release of pain-fighting endorphins—this provides temporary relief from symptoms like the burning sensation in your leg or the throbbing pain in your foot.

**Yoga provides an effective Solution**

If the origin of your sciatica is a bulging disc, yoga practice that moves from gentle poses to the other asanas like standing poses and the downward-facing pose will lengthen, strengthen and provide alignment to your lower back.

A herniated disk may not always need surgery, and yoga is an effective way to manage and reduce the problems which result from the herniated disc. However, it’s important to check with your doctor about the acuteness of the condition, because sometimes a surgery becomes essential.
If the reason of your sciatica is pressure on the nerve due to a short, taut piriformis, try to focus on stretching the muscle.

**Yoga Poses That Help with Sciatica Pain**

These stretches are really effective to give a good stretch to your lower back and provide relief from sciatica pain.

1. **The Standing Back Twist**

This is a great pose for people who aren’t really flexible and new to the world of yoga. But this is one pose that will help them to ease into other poses.

Place your foot up on a chair, and keep the outside of your opposite hand on your slightly raised knee; for example, left hand to the right knee or vice versa. Place your other hand on your hip. Twist your upper body while keeping your hips facing forward. Hold the position for thirty seconds, and then switch sides. Don’t force yourself too much; just ease your way into the position.

2. **Standing Hamstring Stretches**

Hamstring stretches are really effective in providing relief from sciatic pain because tight hamstrings can combine with a tight piriformis to restrict the vulnerable sciatic nerve. Sciatic pain is caused by a tightening of the hamstrings and surrounding muscles.
These are a result of activities like driving for extended periods, especially when the car seat is made in a way that you are forced to stay in a slumped position; or during athletic activities. For situations like the above, performing these stretches can really give you relief.

Put your right foot on a support like a chair, a table, or even a bench, anything that acts as a rest. Your foot should be at a hip level or below the hip level. Keep your leg straight, your knee and toes pointing straight up, and your quadriceps engaged.

If your knee tends to get locked or hyperextend, protect it with a microbend. Do ensure that the hip of your raised leg is not lifted, but rather bending downward, without keeping the leg or foot turning outward.

Hold the pose for several breaths and repeat the same on each side. For a still deeper stretch, bend forward over your leg right at the hip crease. Keep your spine and leg straight and your quadriceps firm.

To make the descent of the right hip easier, tie a belt around the top of the thigh of the lifted leg and the foot of your standing leg.

Tighten the belt or try to pull it gently downward at your outer hip to keep the thigh bone down. You can alternate between the two legs or concentrate on the affected side. Hold the position for a few breaths.
3. The Twisted Lunge

This is a slightly difficult pose to perform, but what it really does is open up your hips.

Bring one leg forward and bend it at the knee. The other leg should stay right behind you, feel the deep stretch. Do ensure to keep your feet one leg length apart. Turn your back and place your opposite elbow right on the outside of your bent knee. Bring both your palms together. Hold the pose for thirty seconds.

4. The Cat Pose

This pose is easy to perform but has a lot of benefits, it Improves posture and balance, and strengthens and stretches the spine and neck.
Get onto your hands and knees. Bend your back down and then lift your torso by pulling your shoulders back. Breathe easy and then hold the position for ten seconds. Then reprise your flat back position, tuck your chin into your chest and raise your back. Hold it for ten seconds and then release. Continue to do this for a minute or two. Try to do all the above-mentioned poses at least three times a week.

So, as you see, there are a myriad of sciatica pain relief treatments. Talk to your doctor and find out which treatment works for you and provides the greatest relief from acute pain. However, if nothing works for you, then probably surgery is what you should seek to get lasting relief from sciatic nerve pain.

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