

II. What is Sciatica?

The term sciatica is used to describe the symptoms that arise from the sciatica nerve. The sciatic nerve is a large nerve formed from smaller nerves that branch off from each side of your low back. Symptoms from the sciatic nerve can occur in your buttock, the back of your thigh, in your lower leg and/or in your foot. Symptoms include pain, numbness, tingling, weakness, and/or burning.

An important point to underscore is generally the more the sciatica nerve is irritated, the further down the leg the symptoms of pain, numbness, tingling, weakness, and/or burning occur. The reverse is also true; as the nerve becomes less irritated, the symptoms generally improve in an ascending fashion. This presents as less pain, numbness, tingling, weakness and/or burning in the foot or lower leg. Knowing this can help you gauge whether your self-treatments are helping your sciatica.

In most cases of sciatica, the sciatic nerve is being compressed somewhere along the nerve.

Common causes of compression include:

1. The vertebra (soft jelly-like discs located between bones) of your back may be herniated or ruptured, causing pressing on one of the nerve roots leading to sciatic nerve pain.
2. Degenerative changes in your spine, discs, or ligaments often due to age can result in a smaller opening for the nerve roots of the sciatic nerve to pass through. The smaller hole may cause increased pressure and irritation of the nerves. This may lead to spinal stenosis.
3. Compression from a small muscle in your buttocks called the piriformis muscle. This condition is often referred to as false sciatica, which can still create sciatica-like symptoms. It is also known as piriformis syndrome.

This video series is focused on the first cause of compression listed, which is from the disc becoming herniated or ruptured. We will provide subsequent video series in the future to address the other two issues listed above.

So, with sciatica you have a nerve that is angry and irritated. Can it get better? YES! Can we stop the compression, reduce the irritation, and eliminate the symptoms of sciatica? YES! Everything we suggest in these videos are recommended with that end in mind.