

Sciatica

Sciatica is a common term used to describe referred pain into the leg generally from a source in the lower back. Sciatica usually occurs following injury to one of the discs in the lower back. The discs act as shock absorbers in the spine and may be injured in numerous ways, the most common being after heavy lifting or maintaining prolonged positions (E.g. gardening or prolonged sitting). Pain to the leg can be referred from the discs themselves or from compression of one of the spinal nerves.

The type of pain associated with sciatica can vary but is usually a deep ache through the buttock and down the back of the leg (which may radiate all the way down to the foot). Associated neurological signs can be presented which include pins and needles, numbness and occasionally weakness. The source of sciatica can usually be diagnosed through assessment by a physiotherapist and can be confirmed with a CT scan or MRI scan.

Management of sciatica pain is dependent on the severity of the condition. Initially, rest from aggravating factors is required with some analgesic and/or anti-inflammatory medication. Early physiotherapy management is essential to allow for the healing of the injured disc and to promote adequate strengthening.



Treatment may consist of:

- Spinal mobilisation
- Soft and deep tissue massage to reduce muscle spasm
- Taping to support the injured area
- An exercise program to improve general mobility
- Prescription of a lumbar support for seated activities
- Clinical Pilates to strengthen the spinal stabilising muscles - This form of management can also assist in preventing further low back injury

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