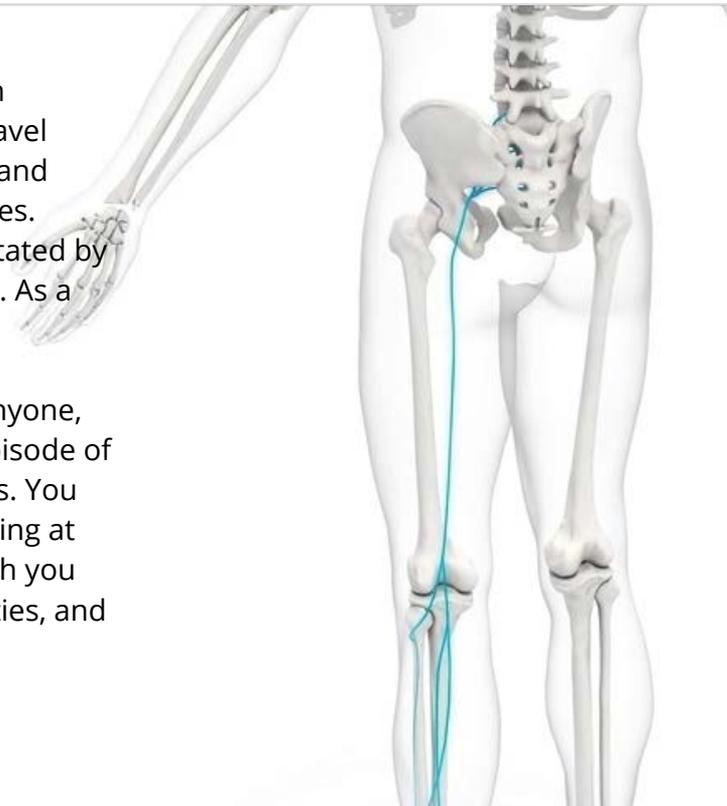


# Sciatica

Sciatica is the term often given to nerve pain travelling down the leg. Symptoms can include weakness, numbness, pins and needles, electric shock sensations, and aching. The pain can vary from infrequent and irritating, to constant and incapacitating.

As the nerves originate from the spaces between the lumbar vertebrae close to your discs, they travel the length of your legs through various muscles and connective tissues, and wrap closely to your bones. Nerves are very robust structures but can be irritated by injury, or issues with any one of these structures. As a result you can experience nerve irritation.

Nerve pain does not discriminate. It can affect anyone, but the good news is that for most people, an episode of sciatica will start to settle within four to six weeks. You will not do any harm by keeping mobile and staying at work. In fact, this can often be beneficial although you may need to adapt the way you do certain activities, and get up from sitting more frequently



Perform some gentle back and leg stretches to maintain flexibility in your tissues and encourage your body's natural healing and recovery process. Strengthening exercises will help to prevent your back from getting weaker and can reduce your chances of experiencing a recurrence in the future.

Try to link your exercises to activities you do regularly and perform these exercises regularly and gently. Pain is normal and to be expected so don't worry if some of the exercises are uncomfortable. Just do what you can

You may need to shorten the amount of activity you do at first such as walking or swimming, but these activities can be built up gradually over time.

If you are taking medication, it is important to take these regularly. Do not worry that they may feel like they are masking your symptoms, as they will help you to stay active and strong.

Perform some gentle back stretches to maintain flexibility in your spine and reduce constant pressure on your nerves and discs.



Nerve pain provoked further away from your spine by tension in the buttock, hamstrings, or calf muscles, requires regular gentle stretching to these areas.

Finally, if your symptoms are not settling after six weeks you should seek advice from a healthcare professional.

Similarly, if you experience any of the following symptoms contact your clinician urgently:

- An inability to pass urine when you feel that you need to go.
- Loss of control of your bowels.
- Numbness around your genital area.
- Inability to get an erection.
- Worsening weakness in both legs.

Be patient with your mind and body. The long-term outlook is good.