Sciatica
Also called: sciatic neuritis

Pain radiating along the sciatic nerve, which runs down one or both legs from the lower back.

**Very common**
More than 3 million US cases per year

- Treatable by a medical professional
- Usually self-diagnosable
- Lab tests or imaging rarely required
- Medium-term: resolves within months

It's usually caused when a herniated disk or bone spur in the spine presses on the nerve.

- Pain originates in the spine and radiates down the back of the leg.
- Sciatica typically affects only one side of the body.

- Treatments include self-care, medication such as anti-inflammatories (NSAIDs) or muscle relaxants, physical therapy, and rarely surgery.

**Ages affected**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-2</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-13</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-18</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-40</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-60</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60+</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Symptoms**

**Usually self-diagnosable**

- Pain originates in the spine and radiates down the back of the leg.
- Sciatica typically affects only one side of the body.

**People may experience:**

- **Pain areas:** in the back, buttocks, hip, or lower extremities
- **Pain types:** can be mild, severe, radiating, or sharp
- **Pain circumstances:** can occur due to injury or while sitting
- **Sensory:** leg numbness or pins and needles
- **Also common:** burning sensation, foot numbness, limping, muscle weakness, or weakness
Treatments

Treatment depends on severity
Treatments include self-care, medication such as anti-inflammatories (NSAIDs) or muscle relaxants, physical therapy, and rarely surgery.

Supportive care

Ice pack: Reduces inflammation and dulls sensation of pain.

Monitoring for changes or improvement: Monitoring a medical condition instead of taking action right away.

Medications

Nonsteroidal anti-Inflammatory drug: Relieves pain, decreases inflammation, and reduces fever.
- Ibuprofen (Advil, Children’s Profen IB, Children’s Ibu-Drops, I-Prin, and Motrin IB)
- Naproxen (Aleve, Naprosyn, Ec-Naprosyn, Midol (naproxen), and Mediproxen)

Analgesic: Relieves pain.
- Acetaminophen (Tylenol, Mapap, Feverall, Acephen, and Nortemp)

Muscle relaxant: Reduces muscle tension and helps relieve muscle pain and discomfort.
- Cyclobenzaprine (Amrix and Fexmid)

Steroid: Modifies or simulates hormone effects, often to reduce inflammation or for tissue growth and repair.
- Cortisone

Nerve pain medication: Blocks pain caused by damaged nerves.
- Gabapentin (Neurontin, Gralise, Horizant, SmartRx Gaba-V Kit, and Gralise 30-Day Starter Pack)
- Amitriptyline

Self-care

Physical exercise: Aerobic activity for 20-30 minutes 5 days a week improves cardiovascular health. If injured, pursuing an activity that avoids the injured muscle group or joint can help maintain physical function while recovering.

Therapies

Chiropractic treatment techniques: Adjusting the spine and massaging the back muscles to relieve pain.

Stretching: Stretching exercises can improve flexibility and improve physical function.

Massage: Relaxes tense muscles.

Acupuncture: Insertion of needles into specific points on the body to relieve pain and treat other conditions. A form of traditional Chinese medicine.

Medical procedure

Epidural steroid injection: Injection of cortisone and a numbing agent into the spine. Can relieve back, neck, arm, and leg pain.

Specialists

Orthopedic surgeon: Performs surgery for conditions affecting bones and muscles.

Pain management: Eases suffering and improves quality of life for those in pain.
Physical therapist: Restores muscle strength and function through exercise.
Primary care provider (PCP): Prevents, diagnoses, and treats diseases.

Consult a doctor for medical advice

Note: The information you see describes what usually happens with a medical condition, but doesn't apply to everyone. This information isn't medical advice, so make sure to contact a healthcare provider if you have a medical problem. If you think you may have a medical emergency, call your doctor or an emergency number immediately.

Sources: Mayo Clinic and others. Learn more