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## Exercises For Sciatica

Before we look at a few exercises for sciatica it is important to understand what sciatica is. Often misused and not clearly defined, sciatica is not a diagnosis in itself but in actuality sciatica is a set of symptoms being caused by another medical issue, most often a slipped or herniated disk. The term sciatica refers to the pain caused when one or more of the nerves exiting the lower spine are being compressed or irritated. These nerves exiting the lower spines make up the sciatic nerve. A herniated or slipped disk is not the only medical condition that can cause sciatica but it is the most common.

The medical term for sciatica is a radiculopathy, which means that a spinal disc has extended beyond its normal position and is irritating the radicular nerve (nerve root) in the lower back, which connects with the sciatic nerve. The sciatic nerve branches off as it travels down the lower extremity through the back of the leg, and thus pain can be experienced along this route. Even though it may seem counterintuitive, healing sciatica pain through exercise is better than bed rest. Resting for a day or two after the patients sciatica flares up is acceptable, but inactivity after this time will usually make the pain worse. Your back muscles and spinal structure become deconditioned without exercise and movement and are less able to support the back. Leading to strain and further back injury this deconditioning and weakening is the most common reason for additional back pain. If you want to have healthy spinal discs you need to make sure that you are exercising. Nutrients and fluids are exchange within discs through movement and help to keep them healthy. The focus of most sciatica exercises are on strengthening the back and abdominal muscles to provide more strength and support for your back. If you have muscles that cause pain when they are tight and inflexible, stretching exercises for sciatica targeted muscles is recommended. When you partake in stretching and strengthening exercises, the average patient will recover more quickly from a *sciatica* episode and prevent future flare ups of the pain. Because sciatic pain is not caused by the same ailments, specific sciatica exercises are recommended depending on the cause of the pain. Its just like bringing your car into the mechanic, if the muffler is the problem then rotating the wheels will most likely not fix the problem. A certified athletic trainer, physical therapist, chiropractor or or spine specialist who deals with back and leg pain associated with *sciatica* may recommend a treatment program with exercise being a part of it. Making sure you are properly diagnosed before starting a specific *sciatica* exercise program is important because, while it is rare, sciatica pain can be cause by serious medical conditions such as a tumor or infection that require prompt medical attention. I was going to list an assortment of exercises that one could do but I don't think with what I have said in my above statement that this would be a good idea. Self diagnosis can often lead to further injury so I stick to what I wrote and recommend that before you start specific sciatica exercises you should consult one of the above recommended specialists and discuss a treatment plan with a professional.

Tracy B. Wheeler

Exercises For Sciatica

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