

From Pain to Power:
**A 6-STEP GUIDE
TO HOLISTIC
SCIATICA RELIEF**

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What is Sciatica?

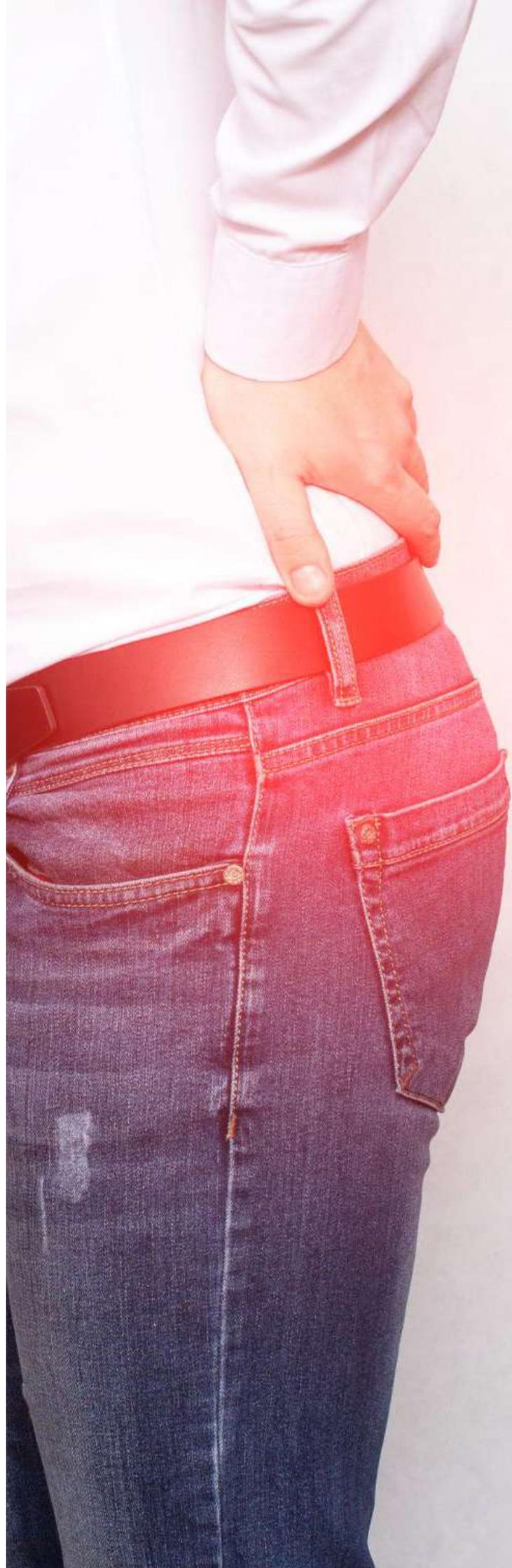
Sciatica is often used to describe low back, hip or leg pain. The term Sciatica is often used as a diagnosis. However, it is more of a symptom describing pain down the back of your leg.

True Sciatica is a condition that causes pain to travel along the sciatic nerve path. This nerve originates in the lower back and extends down to the feet. As the longest nerve in the body, sciatica can cause severe discomfort and significantly impact one's quality of life.

Compression, irritation or a traumatic incident of the sciatic nerve can cause sciatica and typically affects one side of the body.

Symptoms of Sciatica often include:

- **Pain:** The most common symptom is a shooting pain that starts in the lower back or buttocks and travels down the back of one leg.
- **Numbness or tingling:** If you experience numbness, tingling, or weakness in your leg, it may be a symptom of sciatica.
- **Difficulty in movement:** Some individuals with sciatica may find it challenging to move their leg or foot and may experience trouble standing up or sitting down.





Since sciatica can impact sensory and motor functions, identifying the root cause and developing a holistic plan to address your challenges are the best ways to overcome sciatica.

If you are tired of sciatica pain and are ready to live without limitations, this six-step approach to relieve sciatica is a holistic road map to a healthier, happier you.

Disclaimer:

It's important to consult a medical professional before attempting home remedies for sciatica to rule out underlying causes. The information provided in this guide is intended for general informational purposes only and should not be considered a replacement for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment.



Step #1 - Identify the Root Cause of Sciatica

Our Western society relies on prescription drugs and painkillers to treat health conditions. Although they can help reduce pain and inflammation, they often fail to address the underlying cause.

The longer we rely on painkillers, the higher our tolerance becomes and the more dependent we get. If you are taking medication, always consult with a healthcare professional before stopping use.

To determine the underlying cause of your sciatica, your healthcare provider must first discover the true cause of your 'Sciatic Pain', including:

A Herniated Disc

A herniated disc is a problem with one of the rubbery cushions, called disks that sit between the bones that stack to make the spine. These bones are called vertebrae.

A spinal disk has a soft, jellylike center called a nucleus. The nucleus is encased in a tougher, rubbery exterior known as the annulus. A herniated disk occurs when some of the nucleus pushes out through a tear in the annulus. A herniated disk is sometimes called a slipped disk or a ruptured disk.

Ageing, injury, or repeated stress on the spine can cause the inner core of a spinal disc to protrude, leading to irritation, inflammation, and compression of the sciatic nerve.

These symptoms are known as sciatica:

- Shooting pain from the lower back down the leg
- Tingling
- Numbness
- Muscle weakness in the affected leg

Spinal Stenosis

Spinal stenosis is when the spinal canal narrows due to ligament thickening, bone spurs, or disc degeneration. It is commonly associated with ageing.

This narrowing of the spinal canal puts pressure on the sciatic nerve, causing sciatic symptoms. Early recognition of this link is crucial for intervention.

While aging is a common cause of spinal stenosis, other potential factors include:

- Congenital (present at birth) conditions affecting the spine
- Herniated Discs
- Spinal Injuries
- Inflammatory conditions like rheumatoid arthritis

Lifestyle factors such as obesity, altered posture and biomechanics, and lack of regular exercise can also contribute to the development of spinal stenosis.

Sacroiliac Joint Dysfunction

The sacroiliac joint connects the spine and pelvis and transmits forces between the upper body and legs.

Dysfunction of this joint may arise due to several factors, including changes in posture, repetitive movements, injury and degeneration. When this joint is impaired, it can cause sensations similar to those experienced in sciatica.

It is essential to consult a healthcare provider before treating sciatica, as it can sometimes be mistaken for sacroiliac joint dysfunction.

Lumbar Facet Irritation.

Piriformis Syndrome

The piriformis muscle in the glutes can irritate or compress the sciatic nerve. When this muscle becomes tight, inflamed or experiences spasms, it can exert pressure on the sciatic nerve, which can cause discomfort and pain that often extends down the leg.

Piriformis syndrome is usually a result of:

- Prolonged sitting
- Muscle imbalances
- Injury

It is essential to **consult a healthcare professional** for the correct diagnosis of symptoms that may mirror sciatica. This will ensure you receive a personalised treatment plan.

Degenerative Disc Disease

Degenerative Disc Disease (DDD) is when the discs between the vertebrae in the spine start to break down over time due to ageing, repetitive activities and postures, or traumatic events.

The discs act as cushions but lose their water content and elasticity as we age, making them more susceptible to wear and tear. This can lead to irritation of the nerve roots in the spinal cord.

As the discs degenerate, they may also lose height, which reduces the space between the vertebrae. This can cause compression of the nerve roots and result in symptoms such as sciatica.

While ageing is a primary factor, other contributors include:



Genetics

Some individuals may have a family history of DDD and, therefore, can be predisposed to the condition later in life.

Lifestyle choices

Smoking and poor nutrition can impact disc health. Smoking, in particular, has been associated with accelerated disc degeneration, possibly due to reduced blood flow to the spine.

Activities that involve heavy lifting, repetitive motions, or excessive strain on the spine without proper body mechanics can also contribute to disc wear and tear.

A healthy lifestyle incorporating a more balanced approach can mitigate disc degeneration and counterbalance the effects of repetitive activities and postures.

Injury

Traumatic injuries, like falls or accidents, can increase disc degeneration or trigger the onset of DDD.

Addressing the root cause of these conditions is crucial for managing and alleviating associated sciatica symptoms.

It's essential to seek professional guidance from a healthcare expert as the first step towards accurate diagnosis and identifying underlying health conditions or concerns.

Your healthcare provider may recommend specialised tests like nerve conduction studies to assess nerve function and pinpoint compression points based on the suspected cause.

Professionals such as chiropractors can work closely with you to provide adjustments that can help alleviate symptoms and improve spinal function.



Step #2 Shift from Static to Dynamic Movement

When we experience pain or discomfort, the typical recommendation is to rest up and limit movement. However, because sciatica is often caused by nerve compression, physical inactivity and sedentary behaviour can exacerbate symptoms.

Static postures, such as prolonged sitting or standing in one position, can lead to muscle stiffness, reduced blood flow, and increased inflammation in the affected area.

Managing sciatica often involves gentle exercises that promote flexibility and strength, which can help reduce muscle stiffness, improve blood circulation, alleviate inflammation and increase nerve mobility.

Here are four ways to incorporate dynamic movement into your daily routine:

Walk

- Regular walking is a low-impact therapeutic exercise that promotes healthy blood circulation and prevents stiffness.
- Begin with shorter walks and gradually increase duration and frequency, ensuring a comfortable pace for your needs.

Swim

- Swimming is an effective option for sciatica relief due to its low-impact requirements.
- The buoyancy of water minimises stress on joints and provides resistance, engaging muscles without causing excessive strain.

Stretch

- Integrate gentle stretches to enhance flexibility, alleviate muscle tightness, increase space for the nerve and improve nerve mobility.
- These gentle stretches should target specific areas, such as the lower back, hips, and legs, to address the regions commonly affected by sciatica.

Take Regular Breaks

- Take a break from sitting every 30 minutes to stand up, change posture and stretch.
- Every hour, take a short walk around your office or home. Take this opportunity to make a drink or pop the kettle on.
- Every 2 hours, perform gentle stretches to promote circulation and flexibility.

Static movement can negatively affect your health, so it's crucial to prioritise dynamic movement in your daily routine.

By consistently engaging in gentle movement, you can improve overall mobility and reduce the risk of sciatica recurrence. This can contribute to long-term relief from sciatica.

Consulting with a healthcare professional is essential to address the root cause of sciatica. Treatment often requires a combination of approaches for long-term results.



Step #3 - Practice Nerve Flossing Techniques

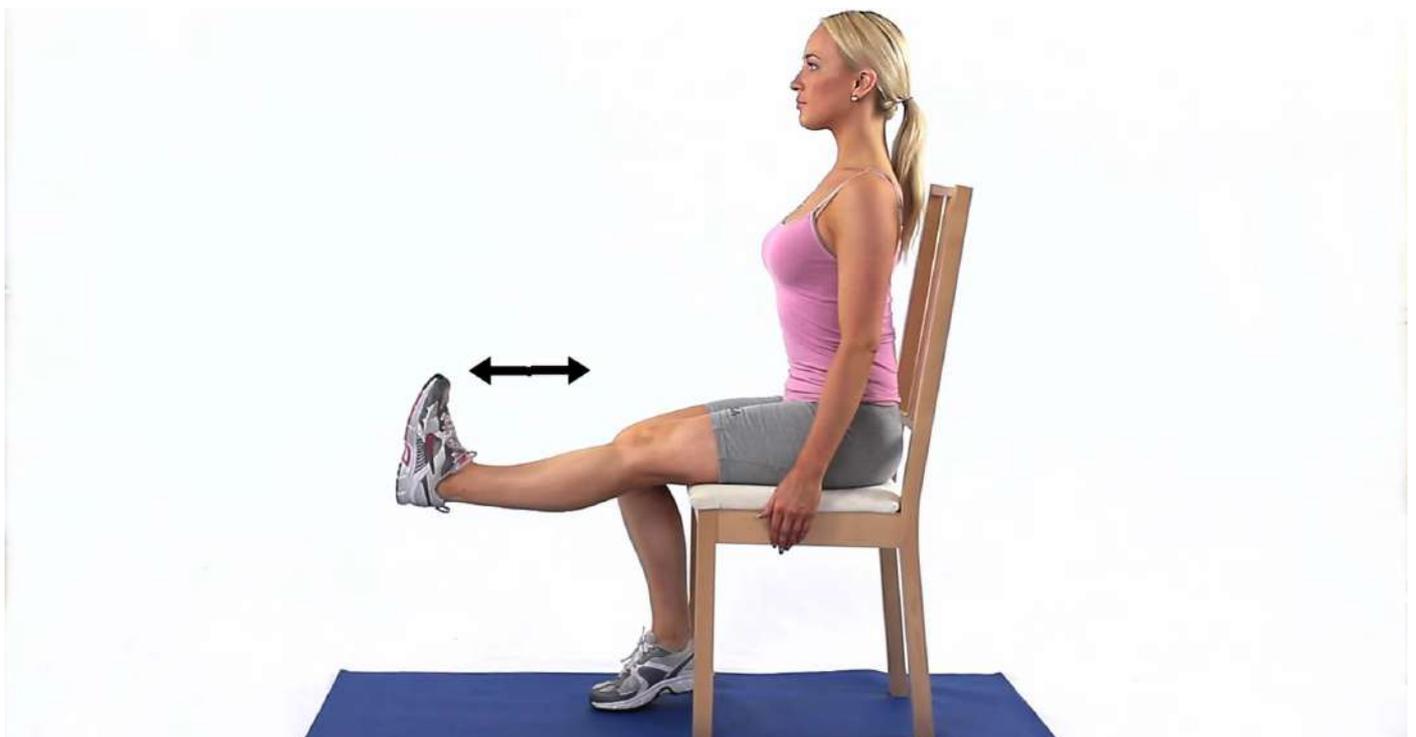
Before you skip ahead, nerve flossing isn't as strange as it sounds. It is a therapeutic technique that involves gentle and controlled movements to mobilise the sciatic nerve.

The objective is to decrease irritation, enhance nerve mobility, and promote better function while reducing pain.

If you are considering incorporating nerve flossing techniques into your routine, consult a healthcare professional, as an expert is best equipped to monitor these movements.

Three Effective Nerve Flossing Techniques

✔ Seated Sciatic Nerve Glide





Click here to view
exercise video

How to Perform a Seated Sciatic Nerve Glide

1. Sit on a chair with your back straight.
2. Extend one leg forward, heel on the ground, and flex your foot.
3. Gently raise your toes toward the ceiling, creating a stretch along the back of your leg.
4. Slowly return to the starting position. Repeat several times, then switch legs.

⚠ Safety Guidelines for Nerve Flossing

Nerve flossing should be done slowly and precisely to ensure safety and effectiveness. It is recommended that this technique be performed under the guidance of a healthcare professional.

✗ Stop if you feel pain beyond a gentle stretch.

✓ Coordinate your breathing with the movements, inhaling as you stretch and exhaling as you return to the starting position.

It is essential to keep track of your progress and any changes in symptoms as you start incorporating nerve flossing into your routine. You should also adjust the intensity or technique of the exercise to suit your abilities.

Nerve flossing can be used with other therapeutic interventions in this guide, such as stretching, strengthening exercises, and modalities like heat or ice application.

By incorporating nerve flossing techniques into your routine with proper guidance, you can actively contribute to easing sciatic nerve irritation, improving flexibility, and enhancing overall nerve function.

Step #4 - Essential Mobility Exercises for Sciatica

Exercises that enhance flexibility in the hips, lower back, and legs are recommended for treating sciatica and a healthier lifestyle.

Mobility exercises are beneficial for improving joint health, preventing injuries, and correcting poor posture alignment.

These movements increase blood flow to the affected areas, providing oxygen and nutrients to the nerves, muscles, and other tissues. Improved circulation also helps reduce inflammation and supports the healing any underlying issues contributing to sciatica.

Here are nine practical mobility exercises to practise to help alleviate sciatica pain.

Always consult with a healthcare professional before attempting to address sciatica at home.



Hip Flexor Stretches

These stretches target the muscles at the front of the hip, such as the iliopsoas and rectus femoris.

When these muscles are tight or shortened, they can cause an anterior pelvic tilt, which puts pressure on the lumbar spine and worsens sciatic nerve discomfort.

Performing hip flexor stretches can help by increasing flexibility and reducing tension in the hip region.



How to Perform

1. Lunge with one foot forward and the other behind
2. Gently sink the hips forward
3. Hold this position for 15-30 seconds
4. Repeat on both sides

Seated Glute Stretch



Click here to view exercise video

Piriformis Stretch

The piriformis is a small muscle deep in the buttocks that can sometimes cause pain and discomfort when it irritates or compresses the sciatic nerve. Stretching can be helpful to relieve this tension.

These two variations of the piriformis stretch target different angles and aspects of the muscle.



How to Perform

1. Sit with one ankle crossed over the opposite knee
2. Gently press on the raised knee to feel a stretch in the buttocks

Mindful breathing can also help to alleviate sciatica discomfort. Deep, diaphragmatic breathing stimulates the vagus nerve, triggering the relaxation response and reducing sympathetic nervous system activity.

The sympathetic nervous system is associated with the "fight or flight" response, which can lead to increased muscle tension, vasoconstriction, and heightened.

Therefore, breathwork can be used to combat the symptoms of sciatica.

Seated Hamstring Stretch

The seating hamstring stretch is an excellent exercise for easing sciatica-related discomfort by targeting the muscles at the back of the legs.

This stretch is particularly effective in promoting flexibility and reducing tension in the hamstring muscles, which is crucial for relieving sciatic pain.



How to Perform

1. Seat with your feet hip-width apart with a straight spine.
2. Hinge at the hips and reach towards your toes.
3. Hold the stretch for 15-30 seconds.
4. Repeat as needed.
5. Increasing the depth of the stretch over time.



Step #5 - The McKenzie Method

The McKenzie method was developed by physiotherapist Robin McKenzie, also known as Mechanical Diagnosis and Therapy (MDT). This method emphasises patient empowerment and self-treatment.

McKenzie understood that treating spinal and musculoskeletal problems requires a comprehensive, long-term strategy that involves making lifestyle changes to prioritise health and well-being and avoid activities that cause stress on the body.

The McKenzie Method is a holistic approach that involves:

- **Comprehensive assessment:** Based on the individual's response to various movement positions and exercises.
- **Prescribed exercises:** Based on the assessment, specific exercises, often involving extension or other directional preferences, are defined.

- **Patient education:** Individuals are taught to recognise and manage their symptoms through prescribed exercises and self-care techniques.

It's essential to consult with a healthcare professional, such as a physiotherapist or chiropractor, to determine which exercises are best for you when following the McKenzie method.

Centralisation (the pain moving to your spine) is a component of the assessment process—if your pain moves from your extremities to your back while you do certain movements, it is considered a sign that the exercises could be beneficial.

Here are some common exercises used in the McKenzie method:

Lying on your Stomach

This position reduces pain by unloading pressure on your lower back and aligning your spine.

- Lie down on your stomach with your arms at your sides.
- Turn your head to the side or face down and hold for 2 to 3 minutes.
- Repeat up to eight times a day.

Lying on your Stomach

- Support your lower back by adding a pillow under your abdomen.
- Lie facedown, and place a pillow under your stomach and pelvis.
- Keep your arms at your sides.
- Turn your head to the side or face down, holding for 2 to 3 minutes.
- Repeat up to eight times a day.

Prone on your Elbows

This exercise helps restore the natural curve in your lower back, also known as lying face down in extension.

- Lie down on your stomach and prop yourself on your forearms with your shoulders above your elbows.
- Hold for 2 to 3 minutes, then lower your upper body.
- Repeat up to eight times a day.

Prone Press-Ups

Restore your lower back's natural curve with this exercise.

- Lie on your stomach and place your hands under your shoulders.
- Slowly straighten your arms to lift your upper body.
- Hold for 2 seconds and return to the starting position.
- Complete ten reps.
- Repeat up to eight times a day.

Standing Extension

Enhance the backward bending motion of your lower back without lying on the floor.

- Stand up straight and place your hands on your lower back.
- Bend backwards as far as possible.
- Hold for 2 seconds and return to the starting position.
- Complete ten reps.
- Repeat up to eight times a day.

Always consult your healthcare professional before following these exercises, as your practitioner can correctly diagnose your issue and recommend specific exercises for your sciatica.



Step #6: Build Resilience with Sciatica-Specific Exercises

Addressing sciatica aims to provide immediate relief and develop lifestyle habits to prevent future episodes and improve spinal health.

Strengthening muscles in the lower back, hips, and legs contributes to better support for the spine and helps distribute the load more evenly, reducing strain on the sciatic nerve.

After consulting with your healthcare provider regarding concerns about sciatica, it is essential only to follow the recommended exercises. Doing so without guidance could worsen sciatica and lead to further injury.

Bodyweight Romanian Deadlifts



How to Perform

1. Stand with feet hip-width apart, holding a barbell or dumbbell before you.
2. Keeping your back straight, hinge at your hips, and lower the weights towards the ground.
3. Engage your glutes and hamstrings to return to an upright position.
4. Perform three sets of 10-12 reps.

Glute Bridges



How to Perform

1. Lie on your back with knees bent, feet flat on the floor, hip-width apart.
2. Lift your hips towards the ceiling, squeezing your glutes at the top.
3. Hold for a moment, then lower your hips back down.
4. Perform three sets of 15 reps.

Dead Bug



Bird-Dog



How to Perform

1. Start on your hands and knees in a tabletop position.
2. Extend your right arm forward and left leg back, keeping your back straight.
3. Hold for a moment, then return to the starting position.
4. Repeat with the left arm and right leg.
5. Perform three sets of 12 reps on each side.

Forward Plank



How to Perform

1. Begin in a forearm plank position, with elbows directly beneath your shoulders.
2. Keep your body in a straight line from head to heels.
3. Hold the plank for as long as possible, aiming for at least 30 seconds to start.
4. Repeat for three sets.

Being mindful of your body's response during and after exercise is essential. If you experience pain or discomfort beyond normal muscle fatigue, seeking guidance from a physical therapist or fitness professional is crucial. They can provide personalised recommendations for sciatica-specific exercises based on your fitness level and condition. This way, you can perform these exercises correctly and safely.



Sciatic Relief Requires a Holistic Approach

Sciatica is a condition that can arise from various causes. Therefore, an individualised and comprehensive approach is needed to relieve pain and prevent further problems.

The primary objective of this guide is to provide you with the tools to manage sciatica in the long term and lead a happier and healthier life.

The most effective way to combat pain and take proactive measures to protect your spine is by combining these sciatica-specific exercises and therapeutic strategies.

To enhance your well-being, it is essential to integrate these methods into your daily routine while collaborating with a healthcare professional to diagnose, treat, and manage sciatica accurately.

Benefits of Partnering with a Chiropractor for Sciatica Relief

Chiropractors offer various services to treat sciatic nerve irritation's root causes and symptoms.

Just as you would regularly visit your dentist or optician, scheduling regular appointments with a chiropractor can provide a comprehensive care plan that enhances your spinal health and takes a holistic approach to improve your overall well-being.

When you partner with a chiropractor, you'll receive:

- ✔ An individualised assessment
- ✔ Targeted spinal adjustments
- ✔ Comprehensive treatment plan
- ✔ Non-invasive and drug-free options
- ✔ Educational guidance and empowerment
- ✔ Improved mobility and function
- ✔ Long-term results

Our team at Liverpool Chiropractic Clinic is dedicated to helping people move, live and feel better by assessing the root cause of sciatica during an initial spinal assessment and developing a comprehensive treatment plan.

