# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Doctor Told Me I Have Sciatica</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sciatica &amp; Low Back Pain Prevention</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proper Sleeping Positions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six Things Making Your Back Pain Worse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
My Doctor Told Me I Have Sciatica!

This is a phrase I hear on a regular basis in my chiropractic practice.

There is no secret to resolving this non-relenting lower back and leg pain termed ‘sciatica’. Each of our patients are different, they have different pain thresholds, different biomechanics/ergonomics that have lead them to this point, different anatomical structure. Also, this term in my opinion has been misunderstood/overused by medical professionals.
Chapter 1

My Doctor Told Me I Have Sciatica!

Sciatica can be caused by a number of things.

The Piriformis which is a muscle within the gluteal area has the ability to compress or irritate the Sciatic Nerve. This can happen with repetitive injury or a substantial trauma, such as a fall. The location of this leg pain is usually down the back of the leg passing the knee and going into the heel/foot.

The intervertebral discs within the lumbar spine (lower back) have the ability to produce chemical irritants to the Sciatic Nerve which will increase leg pain. Often the pain may or may not pass the knee and can be located in the front, back or side of the leg. The location of the pain is dependent on which lumbar disc is the culprit.

The best technique I have utilized in practice to resolve sciatic and back pain to herniated disc is the chiropractic technique called Cox Flexion Distraction. It is a very effective, safe, gentle, non-force, and non-surgical procedure. Many consider surgery and physical therapy more often than chiropractic treatments for herniated disc and pain management and/or physical therapy for sciatica. Among different chiropractic technics, the Cox Flexion Distraction is superior in healing herniated discs and sciatica.
Chapter 1

My Doctor Told Me I Have Sciatica!

What is Cox Flexion Distraction?

Cox Flexion Distraction, which is also known as Cox Technic or Flexion/Distraction, involves the use of a specially designed chiropractic table. Typically, the patient lays face down on this table. If the patient is in extreme pain, he/she could lay on his/her side. We will accommodate to the patient’s needs at that time.

For sciatica or herniated disc on the lower back, the chiropractor would move the section of the table below the patient’s waist while stabilizing the vertebrae just above the disc herniation. For instance if the affected area is the fifth low-back disc, the chiropractor would gently stabilize the fourth low-back vertebrae and gently flex the lower part of the Cox table.

The Cox technique can also be used for herniated disc in the neck. The technique similar to the procedure in the low back, the chiropractor would stabilize the vertebrae above the disc herniation and flex the table.

The procedure has a “decompressing” effect such that the herniated disc is slowly moved back to its anatomical place. This “suctioning” effect is not painful, but in fact very comfortable and soothing. A
My Doctor Told Me I Have Sciatica!

A herniated, or protruding, disc in the low back often causes sciatica; the suctioning effect relieves pressure on the sciatic nerve and is very soothing.

Effective for Herniated Discs and Other Back Pain

This Cox chiropractic treatment method works to eliminate sciatica and disc herniation naturally, and is very effective in relieving pain, in both acute or chronic conditions. On average with 8 to 10 weeks of treatment, its success rate for eliminating lower back pain is between 89% and 95%. Not only can it resolve sciatica and lumbar and cervical herniated disc, but also resolve the following other causes of back pain: stenosis (narrowing of the spinal canal), lateral recess stenosis, (narrowing of the canal where the spinal nerves exit) lower back facet syndrome, (lumbar facet syndrome) failed back surgery syndrome.

Compared with a form of physical therapy, the Cox Technic was found to be more effective in reducing pain in one year in a clinical trial that was published in the Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine, September 2006.
The term sciatica describes a persistent pain felt along the sciatic nerve. More than just lower back pain, it runs from the lower back, down through the buttock, and into the lower leg. The sciatic nerve is the longest and widest nerve in the body. It can be subject to inflammation and irritation for various reasons. The sciatic nerve controls the muscles of the lower leg and provides sensation to the thighs, legs, and the soles of the feet.
Chapter 2

Sciatica and Lower Back Pain Prevention

Although sciatica is a relatively common form of lower back pain and leg pain, the true meaning of the term is often misunderstood. “Sciatica” is actually the symptom—not a diagnosis for what is irritating the nerve root and causing the pain. Sciatica occurs most frequently in people between the ages of 30 and 50 years old. Most often, it tends to develop as a result of general wear and tear over time on the structures of the lower spine, not as a result of injury.

What are the symptoms of sciatica?

The most common symptom associated with sciatica is lower back pain which radiates along the path of the sciatic nerve, from the lower back and down one leg; however, symptoms can vary widely depending on where the sciatic nerve is affected.

Typically, on one side of the body, some may experience the following:

- Mild tingling
- Dull ache
- Pins and needles
- Numbness
- Muscle weakness
- Cramping
- Even a burning sensation
Chapter 2

Sciatica and Lower Back Pain Prevention

Pain from sciatica often begins slowly, gradually increases over time. In addition, the pain can worsen after prolonged sitting, sneezing, coughing, bending, or other sudden movements.

How is sciatica diagnosed?

Your doctor of chiropractic will begin by taking a complete patient history. You’ll be asked to describe your pain and to explain when the lower back pain began, and what activities lessen or intensify the pain. Forming a diagnosis will also require a physical, orthopedic and neurological exam.

You may be asked to perform some basic activities that will test your sensory and muscle strength, as well as your reflexes. For example, you may be asked to lie on an examination table and lift your legs straight in the air, one at a time. The doctor will palpate your spine and affected muscles to determine what is the cause of the sciatic symptom.

In some cases, your chiropractor may recommend diagnostic imaging, such as x-ray, MRI, or CT scan if needed. Diagnostic imaging may be used to identify the cause of the symptom. It can also be used when patients fail to respond to six to eight weeks of conservative treatment.
Sciatica and Lower Back Pain Prevention

What are my treatment options for sciatica?

For most people, sciatica responds very well to conservative care. This may include chiropractic adjustments, stretching, ice, electric stimulation, flexion and distraction therapy, laser therapy, ultrasound, massage therapy, exercises (Makenzie protocol), and/or therapeutic taping. Keeping in mind that sciatica is a symptom and not a stand-alone medical condition, treatment plans will often vary depending on the underlying cause of the problem.

Your chiropractic doctor will recommend the best treatment plan after diagnosis. Chiropractic offers a non-invasive (non-surgical), drug-free treatment option. The goal of chiropractic care is to restore spinal movement, thereby improving function while decreasing the lower back pain and inflammation.
Sciatica and Lower Back Pain Prevention

Sciatica Prevention

While it's not always possible to prevent sciatica, consider these suggestions to help protect your back and improve your spinal health.

• Maintain a healthy diet and weight
• Exercise regularly
• Maintain proper posture
• Avoid prolonged inactivity or bed rest
• If you smoke, seek help to quit
• Use good body mechanics when lifting

If you are experiencing lower back pain and sciatica symptoms don't put off seeing your chiropractic doctor.
Proper Sleeping Positions

The spine is a column of 24 individual bones called vertebrae that support the body's weight and protect the spinal cord. Spinal discs, located between the vertebrae act as shock absorbers. The spine has three natural curves if viewed from the side of the body. These are the cervical (neck area) lordosis, the thoracic (upper back) kyphosis and the lumbar (lower back) lordosis. These three curves give the spine an "S" shape when viewed from the side of the body. When viewed from the front to back of the body, a healthy spine forms a straight line from the sacrum to the skull.
Proper Sleeping Positions

Good posture refers to a body position that keeps the spine in the natural shape described above. Good posture reduces strain on the muscles and ligaments of the spine, and prevents muscular pain. Unfortunately, common sleeping positions often lead to poor sleeping posture and neck and back pain when sleeping.

Common Sleeping Postures

Side Sleeping Posture
The side sleeping position is the most popular. In this sleep position, the spine maintains its natural S shape, which promotes good sleep posture. Normal side sleeping does have some disadvantages though. When the body is lying on its side, gravity pulls the spine from its naturally straight shape (when viewed from the front or back of the body). This can lead the neck and lower back regions of the spine to bend toward the sleep surface and cause neck or back pain when sleeping. Side sleeping may also result in lower back strain due to over-rotation of the pelvis from dropping the top leg over the bottom leg.

The key to proper posture in this position is to keep the spine in a straight line (when viewed from the front or back of the body). Traditional head pillows can raise the head at excessive angles, but
Proper Sleeping Positions

Sleeping without a pillow typically results in a lack of support. To maintain the spine's straight shape, a neck support pillow should support both the head and neck and position them parallel to the bed. The height of this pillow is different for everyone; it is dependent on the length of your shoulder to neck. We offer a water pillow in the office where you can alter the height of your pillow to make it personalized. To prevent strain in the lower back, a support pillow should be placed between the knees. By positioning the spine in a straight shape and the legs parallel to each other, the body maintains good posture by preventing excessive rotation of the pelvis.

Back Sleeping Posture
This sleep position is the second most popular as it is preferred by approximately 30% of people. The typical back sleeping position places strain on the lower back and neck. Normally, the buttocks and the upper back are in contact with the sleep surface, while the lower back is minimally supported. This posture can strain the lower back and cause pain and discomfort. Traditional pillows often provide minimal neck support or even induce neck strain in this position.

To achieve better sleep posture, research studies and leading medical institutions recommend supporting the neck and knees during back sleep. Placing a support pillow between the neck and sleep surface
Proper Sleeping Positions

will maintain the cervical curve of the spine. Be careful that the pillow is not too high for you, pushing your chin to your chest. An easy way to visualize this is to take a photograph from the side at the level of your bed to see if your head is being pushed forward. Placing a support pillow under the knees reduces strain on the lumbar curve of the lower back.

Stomach Sleeping Posture
This sleep position places the greatest degree of stress on the spine. Perhaps for that reason, it is the least common. Stomach sleeping, especially on soft surfaces, forces the lumbar curve of the lower back into an extended posture and places strain on the neck due to the need to rotate to either side. This is known to cause muscle strain and can lead to neck and lower back pain. Medical professionals often encourage stomach sleepers to try to adopt another sleep position for these reasons.

People who prefer this sleep position can prevent muscle strain by making changes to their sleep posture. Placing a back support pillow under the pelvis will raise lower back and help maintain the lumbar curve. Individuals who experience neck discomfort should consider placing a pillow support under the shoulder on the side to which the head is turned - this will reduce some of head and neck rotation.
Proper Sleeping Positions

The Bottom Line

Not all sleeping positions are equal and we can see some postures do more harm than others. Depending on which one you prefer you may want to try a different posture to prevent muscle strain and interrupted sleep patterns. Nevertheless, if you aren't comfortable in trying a different one there are ways to improve your current posture as described earlier. No matter which one you choose the goal is to keep your spine in that optimal "S" shape while asleep.

This will relieve muscle tension in your neck & back, relax the shoulders, and correctly position you for restful sleep. Another aspect to achieving this is to purchase an orthopedic pillow depending on the position you usually sleep in. Experiencing neck pain from poor sleeping posture or other causes? I recommend you head over to my blog post to read more about that.

If you find pain is present from poor sleeping posture it is important to deal with it sooner rather than later. Pain is not a lifestyle.
Six Things That Can Be Making Your Back Pain Worse

I often get patients in my office in severe pain and can not stand up straight, this happens far too often. Usually what they told me they have been doing or not doing has made the injury progress. "My friend told me to put heat on it." "I tried to crack it myself." "My doctor told me to wait 4-6 weeks and if it didn't go away to see an orthopedic surgeon". You should be evaluated by a musculoskeletal specialist for a proper care plan to be put into place.

Your chiropractor is trained to know what to do and when to do it and this may be different for each individual. Following are some general tips to get you healing faster.
Six Things That Can Be Making Your Back Pain Worse

Six Actions You Should Avoid

1.) Ignoring the Pain!

Pain is your body’s way of telling you that something is wrong. The human body is smart, LISTEN! It is a reoccurrence that a new patient presents having this same pain for months or even years. The length of time it takes to rehabilitate that patient is much longer than the patient that comes in after the first sign of pain or dysfunction.

2.) Waiting for your general practitioner to recommend a specialist.

Primary care physicians typically don’t have in depth training in musculoskeletal dysfunctions. They may not even know what your diagnosis is from a physical exam such as an orthopedic or chiropractor will. You should always be an advocate of your own healthcare. If your back pain has lasted more than 2 weeks it is time to bring up a referral to a chiropractor, physical therapist or orthopedic who specializes in spine.
Six Actions You Should Avoid (continued)

3.) Choosing surgery too soon.

Surgery may be the right option for you but surgery in general should also be recommended by multiple practitioners of various specialties. It is rare that I will recommend surgery to my patients before they have exhausted all non-invasive options such as: acupuncture, physical therapy, massage therapy, pain management, dietary changes, etc. You need to give all these options a chance to work and improve your healing process, sometimes that process is a long road.

4.) Focusing on MRI results

MRI scans are pictures, they do not dictate how much pain you are in. In fact you may have unbearable pain and your MRI is normal. You may also have a significant herniated disc and be completely functional with little to no pain. A skilled physician should be able to do your examination and view your diagnostic tests to make an appropriate diagnosis and treatment plan.
Six Things That Can Be Making Your Back Pain Worse

Six Actions You Should Avoid (continued)

5.) Remaining Inactive

If you are in acute pain one or two days is fine for bed rest although after that it is not recommended. Over time the inactivity leads to atrophy and possibly increased pain. Movement is key in the healing process. This does not mean that a proper lumbar support belt should not be worn during times of activity to stabilize the area.

6.) Not following a care plan

Usually with any musculoskeletal issue their needs to be a relief phase of care where you are correcting the dysfunctional structures. After the pain is gone the patient usually discontinues treatment all together. At Nuzzi Chiropractic we believe in a home exercise program to correct the biomechanical imbalances that have lead to the injury. This is usually a home program or a referral to one of our personal trainers we work closely with. You also need to maintain your spine- correct the dysfunction prior to the pain.
Six Things That Can Be Making Your Back Pain Worse

Be sure to followup with a musculoskeletal specialist- orthopedic, physical therapist, chiropractor, etc. They will steer you in the right direction to allow the healing process to begin. You will want to follow through with a proper care plan that includes rehabilitation, this ensures your injury will not reoccur.
Pain is not a life style.

To learn more about all of the benefits of chiropractic care and how it can help you, please request a free consultation from Nuzzi Chiropractic. You have nothing to loose, but everything to gain - an improved healthier life style.

Request a free Chiropractic Consultation offered by

Nuzzi Chiropractic
Family & Sports Center

Click Here