



Body Awareness

Physical Therapy

The Body Beat

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Sciatica

What's Inside?

Q'n'A.....	2
Graduate of the Month.....	2
Community Corner.....	3
Healthy Hints.....	4

Sciatica is a common condition that one refers to when they have back and leg pain. The pain of sciatica varies in intensity and severity. In some patients, there is a feeling of discomfort in the low back and down the back of the leg. In others, the pain may be so intense that it totally incapacitates the afflicted individual. The pain may be limited to the buttocks and low back region, it may extend only to the knee, or it may involve the calf and outer surface of the foot. There is usually no weakness, but you may notice that you are keeping your knee slightly bent while walking to prevent an onset or increase in pain. One might ask why there are so many different presentations of sciatica?

The sciatic nerve is the

largest nerve in the body. It originates in the lower levels of the back and travels through the buttock region and into the back of the hamstring. It then splits off into smaller nerves that innervates the lower leg and foot. The function of the nerve is to relay messages from your brain to your lower body and back again. It controls your ability to use your muscles as well as provide sensation of hot, cold, and pain. Any portion of the sciatic nerve from your lower back to your foot can be compromised, thus creating any number of symptoms. Sciatica is most common in the third to sixth decades of life and occurs about three times more frequently in men than women. In most cases a bulging or ruptured disc is the cause of sciatica.

Treatment of sciatica

depends on the underlying cause of the symptoms. Diagnosis of sciatica rests on history, findings on examination, and CT or MRI of the spine. The results of these studies will show if the nerve is being compromised by a disc problem, osteoarthritic changes, or other causes. In these cases physical therapy may be a good first choice of treatment. But what happens when these tests come back negative and you still have pain? A comprehensive biomechanical evaluation by a physical therapist can determine if the surrounding muscles, excessive or limited joint mobility, or movement dysfunction may be the cause your symptoms.

Q'N'A

Your questions answered by the Licensed Physical Therapists of Body Awareness Physical Therapy.

Q: What treatment would I get for my sciatica pain if my doctor sends me to therapy?

A: Physical therapy treatment for sciatica may include soft tissue mobilization, stretching and strengthening exercises, and education to improve your posture and body mechanics. The goal is to find exercise and posture movements that decrease your pain by reducing pressure on the nerve.

Q: How can I avoid getting sciatica pain?

A: Although sciatica can not always be prevented, there are several steps you can take to protect your back and decrease your risk. Try to always bend, lift, sit, and stand with a neutral spine position. A neutral spine position includes

keeping your shoulders up and back and making sure your low back is neither arched nor too flat. Sleeping on your side with a pillow between your knees can help maintain a neutral spine position at night. Regular exercise designed to strengthen your back and abdomen also helps to support your spine.

Q: I am pregnant and have pain down my leg, can therapy help?

A: Sciatica is a common problem associated with pregnancy because of changes in body posture, increased mobility in the pelvis, and pressure from the fetus on the sciatic nerve. A physical therapist can help to determine the cause of your leg pain and develop a treatment program designed to address your individualized needs.

BODY AWARENESS GRADUATE OF THE MONTH

Graduate of the Month: Beanita Simmons

Beanita came to our office after injuring her knee while running. Beanita has an active lifestyle and is a personal trainer. Beanita shared with us how much knowledge she attained from her experience in therapy at BAPT. Her therapist educated her about how to strengthen her body to avoid further injury to her knee and helped her to successfully return to



her active lifestyle with less pain. She told us how motivated she is to continue her home exercise program.

As a personal trainer, I've learned more about the body and its functions while seeing my physical therapist than during school.

Beanita Simmons

Community Corner

Body Awareness News

Our Costa Mesa office recently received a make over. Come check out our beautiful updated facility when you are in the area, we would love to see you!

We are excited to announce that our San Clemente office will begin offering Pilates mat classes. Call to get the schedule and to sign up for our first class starting May 16th!

Chrissie Morgan, PT, owner of BAPT, recently had the honor of presenting a lecture to her peers at the Orthopaedic Education and Research Institute of Southern California.

Win a pair of movie passes!

Word Scramble

First 5 people to call with the correct answers win 2 movie passes!

Tcasici renev	_____
Nagsdois	_____
Chispaly rhytape	_____
Misrodcfto	_____
Antixmenano	_____
Atemetnt	_____
Tobkcust	_____
Rotistarochiet	_____

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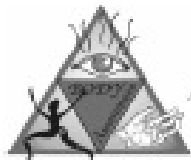
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Healthy Hints

Recommendations for preventing sciatica pain.

- Exercise regularly, this is important for your over all health but especially for keeping your back and spine healthy.
- Maintain proper posture, when you sit make sure your chair supports your low back and your desk and computer are at an ergonomically correct position.
- Use good mechanics when you bend, twist and lift. Bend forward at your knees, **not** your back when you lift and check how heavy an object is before lifting to insure it is not too heavy.
- Move your feet to turn your body instead of twisting at the waist.
- Bring reading material to up to eye level instead of bending forward to read.