

One in 5 people will get this next pain sometime in their life. It's a back pain called sciatica. There are many kinds of back pain which I will cover in the future, but this one is the most common. Pain radiates from the lower back down one or both legs, sometimes stopping in the thigh and sometimes going all the way down to the feet. You don't feel any pain above the buttocks/glute area. It can be mild or it can knock you down.

The main **cause** is **pressure** on the spinal chord exit point of the nerve at number 4 & 5 vertebrae (L4 & L5) in the lumbar area. Much rarer causes can include tumors, cancer, bony growth or infection. The usual medical treatment is physical therapy, pain killers, steroid shots like cortisone, and finally surgery. Many times the **cause** of the **pressure** is not addressed adequately

Here are some of the **causes** of the **pressure**:

- Spasms in the long muscles which run up both sides of the spine (erector spinae muscles)
- A rotated pelvis
- Weak muscles in the lower back
- Severe shortening of the hip flexor muscles (rectus femoris and iliopsoas)
- Tight lateral calf muscles
- Tight buttock/glute/hip muscles

What can be done to relief the **pressure**?

- As first aid for a debilitating sciatica attack: lay flat on your back with your lower legs resting on a chair seat. Take a small hand towel, roll it up and place it barely under your buttocks. Just enough to raise your tail bone off the floor about 1/2 inch.
- If you are lucky, hot Epsom salt and baking soda baths MIGHT work to release the muscle culprit(s).
- If you are not lucky, you need to see me, the sooner the better, to help the muscles loosen and take the **pressure** off the sciatic nerve. You can get relief even if you've had this type of back pain for a long time.

NOTE: The way you sleep, work, exercise, sit, etc. can pre-dispose you to sciatica. You then do that seemingly small thing that is "the straw that brakes the camel's back" to send you into, what can be, terrible pain.

Next week's problem pain will be knee pain.