

Sciatica

Diagnosis Explanation:

Sciatica is **pain, numbness, or tingling** that radiates along the **sciatic nerve**, which runs from the **lower back through the buttocks and down the legs**. It is often caused by a **herniated disc, spinal stenosis, piriformis syndrome, or degenerative disc disease**. Symptoms include **sharp, burning, or shooting pain** in one leg, **worsened by sitting, bending, or standing for long periods**.

Specific Work Modifications:

- **If your job requires standing or walking:** Use **shock-absorbing shoes**, take breaks to sit, and **shift weight frequently**.
- **If your job involves lifting:** Avoid **heavy lifting, bending forward, and twisting**. Use a **brace if needed** and lift with your **legs, not your back**.
- **If your job is desk-based:** Use an **ergonomic chair with lumbar support**, keep **feet flat on the floor**, and take **standing breaks every 30-60 minutes**.
- **Avoid:** Prolonged sitting or standing, bending at the waist, and twisting motions.

Specific Activity Modifications:

- **If you run or play sports:** Reduce high-impact activities and switch to **swimming, cycling, or walking on soft surfaces**.
- **If you hike:** Use **trekking poles**, avoid heavy backpacks, and choose **flat terrain**.
- **If you do weightlifting:** Avoid **deadlifts, heavy squats, and leg presses**; focus on **core stability exercises**.
- **Avoid:** High-impact activities, excessive bending forward, and twisting.

Recommended Supplements:

- **Collagen Peptides** - 10g daily to support discs and ligaments.
- **Magnesium** - 300-400mg daily to relax muscles and prevent spasms.
- **Omega-3 Fatty Acids** - 1000mg daily to reduce inflammation.
- **Vitamin D3 + Calcium** - 1000 IU/500mg daily for bone and nerve health.
- **Turmeric (Curcumin)** - 500-1000mg daily for pain relief.

Recommended Nutrition and Hydration:

- **Eat Anti-Inflammatory Foods** (salmon, leafy greens, turmeric, berries, nuts) to reduce nerve irritation.
- **Increase Lean Protein** (chicken, fish, tofu, eggs) to support nerve and muscle healing.
- **Consume Hydrating Foods** (cucumber, watermelon, citrus) to maintain tissue

hydration.

- **Limit Processed Foods & Sugars** to prevent inflammation.
- **Hydration:** Drink **8-10 cups of water daily** to keep spinal discs hydrated.

Home Exercise Prescription (Rehabilitation for Sciatica)

Early Phase (0-2 Weeks, Reducing Pain & Nerve Compression):

- **Pelvic Tilts** - Lie on your back, flatten your lower back against the floor, hold **5 seconds**, repeat **10 reps, 2x/day**.
- **Knee-to-Chest Stretch** - Lie on your back, pull one knee toward chest, hold **20 seconds**, switch sides, repeat **3x/day**.
- **Piriformis Stretch** - Sit or lie down, cross one ankle over the opposite knee, hold **20 seconds, 3x/day**.
- **Cat-Cow Stretch** - On hands and knees, arch and round your back, repeat **10 reps, 2x/day**.

Strengthening Phase (2-6 Weeks, Improving Core & Hip Stability):

- **Glute Bridges** - Lie on back, lift hips while engaging core, **10 reps, 2x/day**.
- **Bird Dog Exercise** - On hands and knees, extend opposite arm and leg, **hold 5 seconds, repeat 10 reps, 2x/day**.
- **Seated Rows (Resistance Band)** - Pull band toward chest while keeping back straight, **10 reps, 2x/day**.

Advanced Phase (6+ Weeks, Preventing Recurrence & Enhancing Mobility):

- **Side Planks (Modified if Needed)** - Hold for **10-20 seconds**, increase gradually.
- **Standing Hamstring Stretch** - Place foot on an elevated surface, lean forward slightly, **hold 20 seconds, 3x/day**.
- **Stationary Cycling or Swimming** - **15-20 minutes/day** for low-impact strengthening.

Helpful Books:

1. *Treat Your Own Back* - Robin McKenzie (self-treatment exercises for spinal health).
2. *The Sciatica Relief Handbook* - Chet Cunningham (lifestyle and exercise strategies to manage sciatic pain).

Click here for more orthopedic patient information.

Contact a Key West orthopedic clinic or reach out to Dr. Jason Pirozzolo.