

[Piriformis Syndrome](#)

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What is Sciatic Pain?

Sciatic pain is simply caused by pressure being placed on the sciatic nerve and there are primarily four things that can create this... you may have one or more of the following:

1. Pressure caused by shortening and tightening of the **piriformis muscle**. This is almost always due to months or years of muscle imbalances in the hip rotator muscles.
2. Pressure caused by spinal **stenosis**, which is a decrease in the space between the vertebrae. This is primarily caused by uneven pressure and compression due to muscle imbalances.
3. Pressure caused by isthmic **spondylolisthesis** which is simply when a vertebrae slips or moves... this can sometimes pinch the sciatic nerve but often times people who have this condition don't have any pain, symptoms, or even know they have it!
4. Pressure caused by a **herniated or bulging disc**. A herniation is when a disc protrudes out from between the vertebrae and this can either be caused by an event like a car accident, or, by months or years of uneven pressure due to muscle imbalances. It is also important to note that many people with herniated discs don't even experience pain or symptoms, and many don't know they have the condition.

As you can see, there is a trend here... in nearly every case, muscle imbalances are the primary cause of the pressure being placed on the sciatic nerve. Sciatic pain comes about either due to a traumatic event, muscle imbalances, or a combination of both. The event scenario is most likely the catalyst for sudden onset of sciatic pain.

So what happens... when there is undue stress on the **piriformis muscle** that stress causes it to go into spasm and then you have pain due to the Piriformis muscle putting pressure on the sciatic nerve. In most cases, people go to physical therapy or minimize their physical activity to break the pain – spasm cycle, and in most cases your symptoms subside. However...the event will also set you up for a life time of sciatic pain if the **piriformis muscle** does NOT recover 100% in both strength and flexibility. The Piriformis muscle is responsible for external rotation (moving your leg so your feet point outward). So over time that muscle gets tight from the positions you put your self in and weakens from lack of use.

<http://www.bodybuildingforyou.com/articles-submit/jesse-cannone/piriformis-syndrome-sciatic-pain.htm>

Sciatica can be described by pain, tingling, or numbness deep in the buttocks and along the sciatic nerve. Sitting down, stretching, climbing stairs, and performing squats usually increases pain. Diagnosing the syndrome is usually based on symptoms and on the physical exam. More testing, including MRIs, X-rays, and nerve conduction tests are administered **to exclude other possible diseases**. If diagnosed with **piriformis syndrome**, the first the first treatment involves progressive stretching exercises and physical treatment. Corticosteroids can be injected into the piriformis muscle if pain continues.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piriformis_muscle

The piriformis syndrome

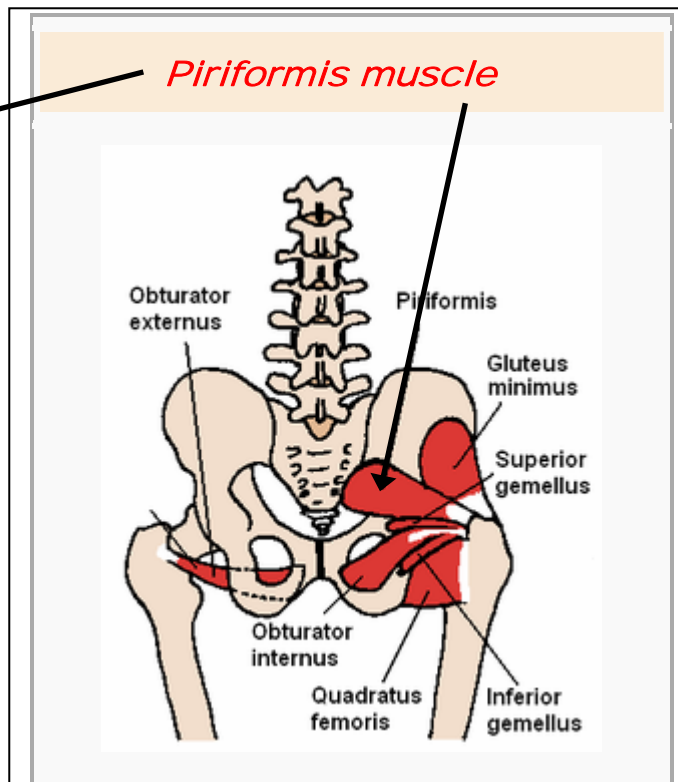
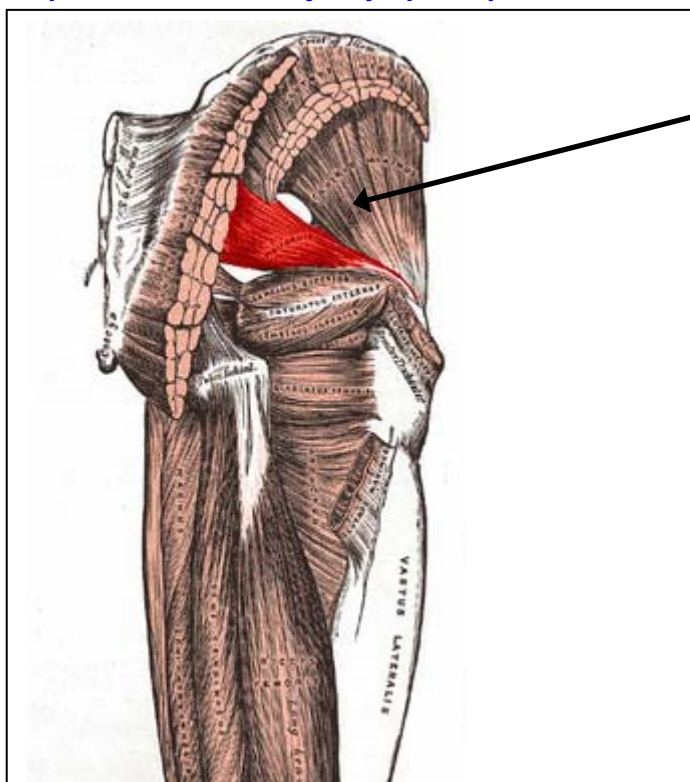
The **piriformis syndrome** is a condition in which the piriformis muscle *irritates the sciatic nerve*, causing pain in the buttocks and referring pain along the course of the sciatic nerve.

This referred pain, called "sciatica", often goes down the back of the thigh and/or into the lower back. Patients generally complain of pain deep in the buttocks, which is made worse by sitting, climbing stairs, or performing squats. The piriformis muscle assists in abducting and laterally rotating the thigh. In other words, while balancing on the left foot, move the right leg directly sideways away from the body and rotate the right leg so that the toes point towards the ceiling. This is the action of the right piriformis muscle.

Stretching the muscle often duplicates the pain. To do the piriformis stretch, lie on your back, and flex the right hip and knee. Now, while grasping the right knee with your left hand, pull the knee towards your left shoulder. This adducts and flexes the hip. In this position, grasp just above the right ankle with the right hand, and rotate the ankle outwards. This applies internal rotation to the hip and completes the stretch. Another way to do this stretch is to stand on your left foot and place the right foot on a chair, such that the right knee and hip are flexed at about 90 degrees. Now, using the right hand, press the right knee across towards the left side of the body while keeping the ball of the right foot on the same spot on the chair.

The piriformis syndrome is diagnosed primarily on the basis of symptoms and on the physical exam. There are no tests that accurately confirm the diagnosis, but X-rays, MRI, and nerve conduction tests may be necessary to exclude other diseases. Some of the other causes of sciatica include disease in the lumbar spine (e.g. disc herniation), chronic hamstring tendinitis, and fibrous adhesions of other muscles around the sciatic nerve. Once properly diagnosed, treatment is undertaken in a stepwise approach. Initially, progressive piriformis stretching is employed, starting with 5 seconds of sustained stretch and gradually working up to 60 seconds. This is repeated several times throughout the day.

<http://www.rice.edu/~jenky/sports/piri.html>



http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piriformis_muscle

Piriformis Syndrome Treatment (Sciatic Pain Relief)

So how do you get rid of your pain? Will learning one new stretch be enough? It very well may be. However depending on the severity of your condition you may need to change your activities of daily living to include new stretches, new exercises that include the use of the hip rotators.

The **piriformis muscle** laterally rotates the extended thigh and abducts the flexed thigh. Abduction of the flexed thigh is important in the action of walking because it shifts body weight to the opposite side of the foot being lifted, which keeps us from falling.

The action of the lateral rotators can be understood by crossing your legs to rest an ankle on the knee of the other leg. This causes the femur to rotate and point the knee laterally



Piriformis Stretch

TOP VIEW



Piriformis Stretch

BOTTOM VIEW

Advanced Piriformis Stretch - Pigeon Pose

This stretch, pictured above, is a more advanced piriformis and hip stretch, in which you use your whole body weight to stretch the piriformis, the [IT band](#) and other hip rotators. Use caution as you get in to and out of this pose.

Start in a push-up position on your hand and toes.

Slide your right knee forward toward your right hand.

Angle your knee, so the outer ankle is touching the floor (see picture).

Slide your left leg back as far as comfortable.

Keep your hips square to the floor.

You should feel a deep stretch in your right glutes (buttock), hip and the outer thigh.

You can either stay up on your hands or fold forward and let your forearms rest on the floor in front of you or fully extend your arm in front of you. Breathe slowly and deeply from your belly. Hold the stretch 30 seconds to 60 seconds and release.

Repeat on the other leg.



http://sportsmedicine.about.com/od/flexibilityandstretching/qt/Piriformis_str.htm

Piriformis Syndrome and Effective Piriformis Stretches

<http://www.thestretchinghandbook.com/archives/piriformis-syndrome.php>