



Piriformis Syndrome

Definition: Piriformis syndrome is a neuromuscular (nerve and muscle) disorder in which the piriformis muscle pinches over the sciatic nerve in the back of the leg.

Common Terms: Piriformis syndrome, piriformis tightness, and even sciatica have been terms associated with this condition.

Typical Mechanism of Injury: Common factors relating to the onset include: a direct blow or fall onto the buttock region, and a lack of exercise and activity, such as stretching, that leads to a tightness of the piriformis muscle itself.

Common Signs and Symptoms: With this condition individuals may complain of deep pain in their hip radiating to the buttocks and possibly down the backside of the leg as well. Pain usually increases with standing and decreases as a person lies on his/her back. Other symptoms may include burning, numbness and tingling in the hip, buttock and lower leg. A tightness and/or tenderness may also be present in the buttock region.

Common Treatment: A common treatment for this condition is a focus on stretching the piriformis muscle in an effort to remove its pressure off of the sciatic nerve. This may include massage therapy and other techniques. Therapeutic modalities such as ultrasound may also be used. Avoidance of positions that cause discomfort is a priority.

Prevention: Maintaining flexible muscles, especially the piriformis muscle, is a key to avoiding this condition. Pre and post-activity stretching may assist with this. In other cases, a person may have to modify equipment or even sitting postures when it comes to prevention of piriformis syndrome.

Expectations: Females tend to develop piriformis syndrome more commonly versus males. This condition may last for an extended period of weeks to months.

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