

**REVIEWED***By Chris at 1:24 pm, Jul 08, 2020*

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# Piriformis Syndrome

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

### What is piriformis syndrome?

Piriformis syndrome is sciatic nerve pain caused by an injured or overused piriformis muscle. This is a muscle inside your buttocks that helps you move your leg. The pain is caused when this muscle pinches your sciatic nerve. You may feel the pain in your hip or down your leg.

### What are the signs and symptoms of piriformis syndrome?

- Hip or buttock pain after sitting, squatting, standing, or climbing stairs
- Sudden or gradual pain that starts in the buttock and spreads to your lower leg
- Trouble walking
- Pain when you cross your legs
- Pain when you pass a bowel movement

### How is piriformis syndrome diagnosed?

Your healthcare provider will examine you, and move your leg in different directions to check for pain. You may also need the following:

- **Imaging tests** such as an ultrasound, a CT scan, or an MRI may be used to help healthcare providers see your muscles and nerves in more detail. You may be given contrast dye before these tests. Tell the healthcare provider if you have ever had an allergic reaction to contrast dye. Do not enter the MRI room with anything metal. Metal can cause serious injury. Tell the healthcare provider if you have any metal in or on your body.
- **An electromyography**, or EMG, may be used to test the function of your muscles and the nerves that control them.

### How is piriformis syndrome treated?

- **Prescription medicines** may be used to relax your muscles and decrease pain and swelling.
- **NSAIDs** help decrease swelling and pain or fever. This medicine is available with or without a doctor's order. NSAIDs can cause stomach bleeding or kidney problems in certain people. If you take blood thinner medicine, **always** ask your healthcare provider if NSAIDs are safe for you. Always read the medicine label and follow directions.

- **Acetaminophen** decreases pain. It is available without a doctor's order. Ask how much to take and how often to take it. Follow directions. Acetaminophen can cause liver damage if not taken correctly.
- **Surgery** may be needed if other treatments do not relieve your symptoms.

## How can I manage my symptoms?

- **Rest as directed.** Avoid activities that make your pain worse.
- **Apply ice to the buttock on your injured side.** Use an ice pack, or put crushed ice in a plastic bag. Cover it with a towel. Leave the ice on for 15 to 20 minutes every hour, or as directed. Ice helps prevent tissue damage and decreases swelling and pain.
- **Apply heat to the buttock on your injured side.** Use heating pads for 20 to 30 minutes every 2 hours for as many days as directed. Heat helps decrease pain and muscle spasms.
- **Stretch as directed.** Lie on your back with your knees bent. Place the ankle of your injured leg on the knee of your other leg. Gently pull your bent leg toward your chest, until you feel a stretch in the buttock of your injured leg. A physical therapist may show you other exercises to stretch and strengthen your hip muscles.

## When should I contact my healthcare provider?

- Your pain worsens or returns, even with treatment.
- You have questions or concerns about your condition or care.

## When should I seek immediate care or call 911?

- You cannot move your leg or foot.

## Care Agreement

You have the right to help plan your care. Learn about your health condition and how it may be treated. Discuss treatment options with your healthcare providers to decide what care you want to receive. You always have the right to refuse treatment. The above information is an educational aid only. It is not intended as medical advice for individual conditions or treatments. Talk to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist before following any medical regimen to see if it is safe and effective for you.

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## Further information

Always consult your healthcare provider to ensure the information displayed on this page applies to your personal circumstances.