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# Radiculopathy



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## What is radiculopathy? Last Visited 05/26/2010

Radiculopathy is a condition due to a compressed [nerve](#) in the [spine](#) that can cause [pain](#), numbness, tingling, or [weakness](#) along the course of the nerve. Radiculopathy can occur in any part of the spine, but it is most common in the lower back (lumbar radiculopathy) and in the neck (cervical radiculopathy). It is less commonly found in the middle portion of the spine (thoracic radiculopathy).

### What are the risk factors for radiculopathy?

Risk factors for radiculopathy are activities that place an excessive or repetitive load on the spine. Patients involved in heavy labor or contact sports are more prone to develop radiculopathy than those with a more sedentary lifestyle. A [family history](#) of radiculopathy or other spine disorders also increase the risk of developing radiculopathy.

### What are the causes of radiculopathy?

Radiculopathy is caused by compression or irritation of the nerves as they exit the spine. This can be due to mechanical compression of the nerve by a [disk herniation](#), a [bone spur](#) (osteophytes) from [osteoarthritis](#), or from thickening of surrounding ligaments. Other less common causes of mechanical compression of the nerves is from a [tumor](#) or [infection](#). Either of these can reduce the amount of space in the spinal canal and compress the exiting nerve. [Scoliosis](#) can cause the nerves on one side of the spine to become compressed by the abnormal curve of the spine. Other causes of radiculopathy include [diabetes](#) which can decrease the normal blood flow to the spinal nerves. Inflammation from trauma or degeneration can lead to radiculopathy from direct [irritation of the nerves](#).

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#### What is sciatica?

Sciatica is pain resulting from irritation of the sciatic nerve. The pain of sciatica is typically felt from the low back to behind the thigh and radiating down below the knee. The sciatic nerve is the largest nerve in the body and begins from nerve roots in the lumbar spinal cord in the low back and extends through the buttock area to send nerve endings down the lower limb.

#### What are causes of sciatica?

While sciatica is most commonly a result of a disc herniation directly pressing on the nerve, any cause of irritation or inflammation of this nerve can reproduce the symptoms of sciatica. These causes include irritation of the nerve from adjacent bone, tumors, muscle, internal bleeding, infections, injury, and other causes.

#### What are symptoms of sciatica?

Sciatica causes pain, a burning sensation, numbness, or tingling radiating from the lower back and upper buttock down the b...

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