



Top 10 Most Burning Questions for Sciatica

1. How long is this going to take to go away?

It depends... on YOU. In general, it takes to 4 to 8 weeks to go through the first 2 phases of healing (no pain, all movement and strength back to normal). It may take another 1 to 4 months to get back to all activities you want to do, depending on how active you are.

Here are 10 variables that determine how fast someone can heal:

- *Overall health* – Typically healthy people and younger people heal faster
- *Other health issues* - Diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, tobacco use, alcohol abuse and body weight all influence healing rates, and make the time to heal longer.
- *Diet* - People who consume more nutrients in their calories heal faster than those who primarily eat processed foods.
- *Rest levels* - Our bodies need sleep and rest to rebuild. A lack of sleep slows healing time.
- *Stress levels* - People who have high levels of stress heal slower.
- *Sedentary lifestyle* - People who sit all day for work or to watch TV heal more slowly.
- *Adhering to a recommended treatment plan* - People who follow advice and instruction from healthcare professionals heal more quickly than those who do not follow through with care.
- *Posture* - People who are highly aware of their daily postures and habits heal more quickly because they can adjust habits such as sleep or sitting positions more quickly.
- *Knowledge* - People who are actively looking for information on how to improve, are more likely to follow-through with successful treatment.
- *A good attitude* - People who think there's hope tend to be more persistent and won't let anything stop them.

2. How long before I see improvements?

Most people we see in the clinic feel better in 2 to 3 visits, or within 1 to 2 weeks. If you go longer than 2 weeks without feeling better or moving better you may be wrong about the cause of your sciatica regardless of what your X-ray or MRI shows.

3. Can I be completely healed or will this come back again?

Most people who complete treatment (meaning they no longer have pain, motion and strength are back to normal and they're back to doing the activities they want to do without pain), have a minimal chance the pain will return. The stronger the person is, the less likely the sciatica symptoms will come back. Your body is a bit like a car - if you take care of it, regularly change the oil and keep it running and fine-tuned, there's little chance of a break down. If you ignore it, it's very likely to break down and be in need of repair.

4. Do I need any special equipment?

At our clinic we use a minimalist approach - we don't use big, fancy, expensive equipment. The one exception may be for people needing traction. Most exercises can be done with a simple ball, exercise bands and a safe place to exercise. Our model focuses on a hands-on Physical Therapist, a table and some basic exercise equipment you can do at home or on the road if traveling. This works best for most people.

5. Should I use heat or ice on my leg?

The cause of most sciatica (pain, numbness or tingling in the leg) is in the lower back and ice/heat on the leg may not change that. However we have seen some people use ice and/or heat on the lower back to help alleviate pain.

6. What exercises should I do?

The best exercises for you depend on what the cause of your sciatica is. We cover the 3 most common causes: Herniated discs, Stenosis/Arthritis, or SI joint problems. Each has a series of gradually more advanced exercises. The key to picking the right exercise is to find the cause of your sciatica.

7. How often should I do the exercises? And do I need to do them forever?

Most people we work with for sciatica do the recommended exercises at least once per day, every day. But doing the same exact exercises for long periods of time, without changing could be a mistake. In general, to get stronger, your exercise routine should progress and get more difficult as your body adapts. Any exercise may make you stronger, but once your body adapts, it's time to move on to something different or more challenging. One of the best programs you can choose once you complete treatment for your sciatica is a consistent walking program. People who walk every day tend to have less risk of reinjuring their back and sciatica.

8. What do I need to do for complete care? Am I going to relapse?

The best thing to do for sciatica is to complete your full treatment program. First, focus on getting rid of the pain, numbness and tingling. Next, focus on getting normal movement and full strength back. Lastly, start to incorporate previous activities you want to do, while continuing exercises at home to get stronger and stronger. Many sciatica patients have no trouble at all but if someone does have a relapse, we take a look at their activity and help them get on the right track. As mentioned before, people who are stronger recover more quickly, so it's usually only one or two visits before that person is on the right track again.

9. How do I know the cause of my pain?

There are 3 common causes of pain:

- People with sciatica from a herniated disc usually have pain bending forward, twisting, coughing or sneezing. The sciatica pain they experience is usually sharp and runs specifically down the back of the leg, possibly into the foot. Herniated disc sufferers are usually 50 years old or younger.
- People suffering from sciatica because of stenosis or arthritis usually answer yes to these 3 questions: • 50 Years of age or older? • Pain with standing or walking? • Relief with sitting?

- People suffering with sciatica from SI Joint problems usually have pain with sitting for long periods. The sciatica they experience is usually on the outside of the thigh. Symptoms may include heaviness of one leg or feeling twisted.

10. Which position should I sleep in?

Sleeping on your back is best, next would be on your side and last is on your stomach. Regardless of position, an important key is to keep your spine in "neutral". This means that it is not twisted to the right or left, but keeps the normal, natural curve. Pillows or folded towels can be placed under your knees, under your side, or under your feet to help you sleep in the least painful position for you.