

# Westwood Massage



## Sciatica and Piriformis Syndrome

The Sciatic nerve is the largest nerve in the human body, about the size of your index finger. It is formed by the union of 5 nerves that originates in the lower back (L4-S3). The nerve then travels down through your buttocks into the back of the thigh, lower leg and finally into the foot.

### **Whats the difference between Sciatica and Piriformis Syndrome?**

Sciatica is characterised by pain that originates in the lower back then into the buttocks and down the back of the leg. This is due to compression of the Sciatic nerve from the vertebra or discs in the lower back. This can be more difficult to treat and although some soft tissue release is helpful if you are experiencing this pain your first port of call should be to see a GP then an Osteopath or Chiropractor.

Piriformis Syndrome is characterised by pain that originates in the buttocks, it then travels down the back of the leg. Despite many people saying they have Sciatica, Piriformis Syndrome is actually much more common. The Piriformis is a small muscle that is located deep in the Glutes. The Sciatic nerve runs below or in some cases through the Piriformis muscles and when this muscle tightens or goes into spasm it can put pressure on the Sciatic nerve which causes pain from the buttocks down the back of the leg.

### **Possible Causes**

- Walking, standing or sitting with the feet turned out
- Sedentary lifestyle (too much sitting)
- Driving for long periods
- Women tend to be more prone to this due to the shape of the pelvis but men are affected too.

### **What can you do to help relieve the problem**

- Heat – If you have a hot water bottle or heat pack try sitting on this for 10 minutes twice a day, the heat will help to relax the muscles.
- Move - The best thing you can do for Sciatica is to try and keep moving as much as possible.
- Self Massage – If you have tennis ball or something similar at home try doing some self massage with this into the buttocks the best way to do this is to sit on the ball and gently roll it around under you.
- Stretch – I have attached a copy of stretches to help release the Piriformis muscles, try to do these at least twice a day, repeating each stretch 3 times and hold for up to 30 seconds. Only do

what feels comfortable to you there should be no pain when doing this. The floor exercise is more difficult so if that looks a little ambitious try the chair stretch.

- Posture – Try to be mindful of your posture especially think about turning your toes inwards!

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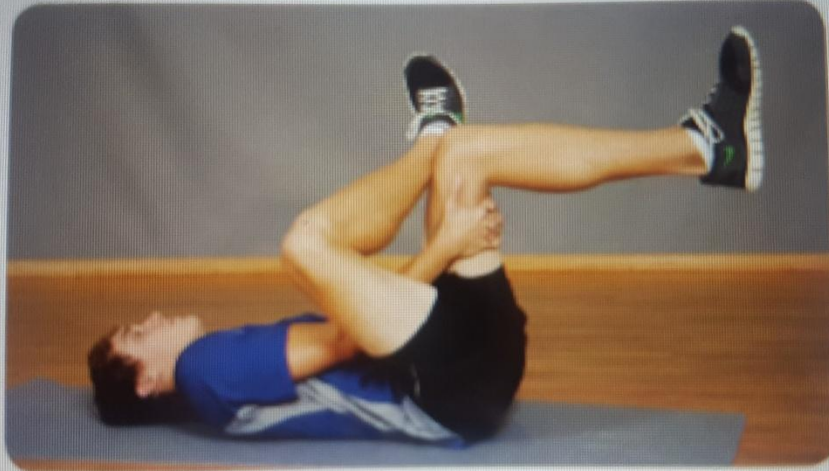


Figure 5.55

