Symptoms of Low Back Pain and Sciatica

by Debra Wood, RN

En Español (Spanish Version)

Most back pain is usually localized in the low back. Stress on the muscles and ligaments that support the spine produces strain in these tissues, and this is the usual cause of lower back pain, although there can be other, more serious causes.

If a nerve is irritated, the pain may extend into the buttock or leg on the affected side, and weakness or numbness may be present. Other symptoms include burning, tingling or a shooting pain down the back of one leg. This is often called “sciatica.” However, the nerve involved is usually a spinal nerve, and not the sciatic nerve. Sciatica is known by many other medical terms, such as lumbosacral radicular pain or radiculopathy.

Sciatic Nerve Pain

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More serious symptoms associated with back pain that may require immediate medical attention include:

- Pain that doesn’t subside or worsens with rest
- Pain that is worse when you are reclined
- Pain that is sudden, severe, or that has gotten dramatically worse
- Progressive weakness or numbness in a leg or foot
- Difficulty walking, standing, or moving
- Numbness in the genital or rectal area
- Loss of bowel or bladder control
- Burning or difficulty with urination
- Fever, unexplained weight loss, or other signs of illness
- If there has been any trauma, fall or impact
- If you have a history of cancer, back pain should be evaluated

REFERENCES:


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