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FREE GUIDE

Sciatica: the basics

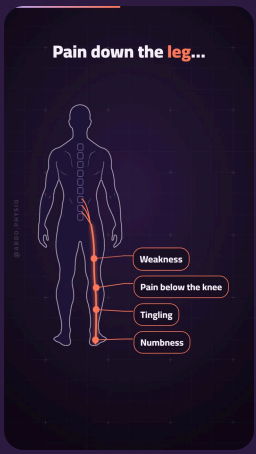
Sciatica is a symptom, not a diagnosis. Keep moving gently, and know the signs that mean go to the emergency department.



1 Move little and often

SHORT WALKS **A FEW TIMES A DAY** **BUILD UP SLOWLY**

1. Start with a **short, easy walk**, even a few minutes.
2. If sitting makes it worse, **get up and move** every 20–30 minutes.
3. Rest in **comfortable positions**: on your side, pillow between the knees.
4. Keep up your **everyday activities** as much as you comfortably can.
5. Every day or two, add **a little more**.



2 What sciatica means

- Symptoms of an **irritated sciatic nerve**: pain down the leg, tingling, numbness, weakness.
- A **disc** is the most common cause, but not the only one.
- **Many cases settle** with time. Bed rest doesn't help more than staying active.
- Ease off and get checked if symptoms **spread further down the leg** or numbness or weakness gets worse.

Ask: what's irritating the nerve? A physiotherapist or doctor can find out.

⚠ Go to the emergency department now if...

- **numbness** around your groin, bottom or genitals
- new trouble **peeing**, or leaking
- losing control of your **bowels**
- sciatica in **both legs**
- leg or foot **weakness** getting worse
- new **sexual** problems or loss of feeling



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Educational content only. Not a substitute for an in-person assessment by a physiotherapist or doctor. Stop any exercise that causes sharp or worsening pain. Sciatica course and causes: Koes et al., BMJ, 2007. Stay active: NICE NG59. Red flags: Finucane et al., JOSPT, 2020.