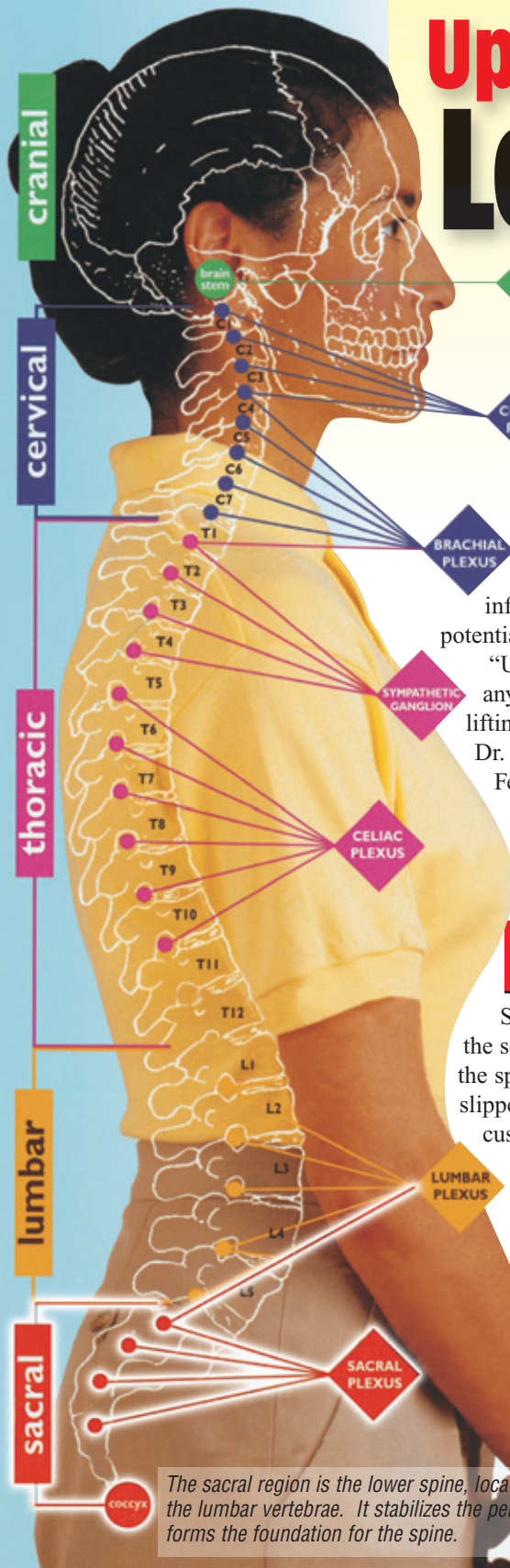


Up Front Treatment For Low Back Pain

By Barbara Williams



Sciatica. Chances are, if you've had it, you know it. When the largest nerve in the body malfunctions, you feel major pain. Sciatica usually starts at the lower back and travels down the back of one or both legs. For many, it is severe and debilitating. For others it may be infrequent and irritating with the potential to get worse.

"Usually something irritates it - anything from a fall, sports, accident, lifting something the wrong way," said Dr. Peter Ferraro, from Sente and Ferraro Chiropractic in Saddle Brook, NJ. "A number of different treatments may work on alleviating the pain, including ice, heat and manipulation."

THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM

Sciatica is caused by pressure to the sciatic nerve - located at the base of the spine - usually by a herniated or slipped disc. These discs are the cushions which separate the bones of the spine or vertebrae. They have a tough and fibrous ring around a soft center.

Pressures within a disc can reach high levels when bending or twisting, and if the soft center pushes through a weakness in the outer ring, this bulge can press against a nerve.

Sometimes the nerve is squashed

between the bulging disc and a bone. This may cause pain, numbness, pins and needles, or malfunctioning limbs.

It may occur from any number of causes, including the ones listed by Ferraro as well as muscle spasms or degenerative disc disease.

"Sciatica by definition means the pain has to be radiating through the leg," said Dr. Dan Fuzer, of Apple Chiropractic in Riverton, NJ. "This nerve is about as big as your thumb at the bottom of the spine, and when it gets inflamed it causes pain."

The prevalence of back pain doesn't surprise most chiropractors. "It's not unusual to see a genetic predisposition to

According to the American Chiropractic Association, 31 million Americans have low back pain at any given time.

sciatica," according to Dr. Peter Hill, who has offices in Weston and Boston, MA. **"Sometimes there is a long line of herniated discs that runs in certain families."**

GETTING RELIEF

The good news is sciatica can be treated. The goal is to reduce the inflammation and relieve the pressure on the nerve.

Chiropractic care is a non-invasive method of addressing this painful condition. According to Fuzer, conservative treatments will help in 80 to 90 percent of cases.

"The best part of chiropractic care is there are no side-effects," Fuzer said. "All the approaches are very subtle, and not painful."

Treatments vary in length, depending on the patient. Some heal in two to three months, others might take longer if they have other ongoing health issues. Fuzer

The sacral region is the lower spine, located beneath the lumbar vertebrae. It stabilizes the pelvis and forms the foundation for the spine.



said he had one “miracle” case where a man was healed after one session.

“Chiropractors must use the approach that is best for each patient – there is no magic bullet that will work for everyone.” Dr. Peter Ferraro, Sente and Ferraro Chiropractic, Saddle River, NJ.

“Those types of cases are the hardest, however, because he tells his friends, and everyone expects to respond the same way,” Fuzer said. **“Patients will respond differently to the same treatments; it all depends on the individual.”**

The key to successful treatment is finding the cause of the pain, say experts. Sometimes a muscle spasm in the buttocks may be triggering the shooting pain. Pregnant women who are suffering from sciatica due to the position of the baby also benefit

tremendously from chiropractic care. “I once treated a woman an hour

before she delivered,” Fuzer said. “I was able to help with the sciatic pain, and her delivery went much more smoothly.”



Sometimes nerves become irritated by a joint that is not aligned properly. Adjustments by a chiropractor can help realign the joint, thereby relieving the pressure on the nerve.

DECREASING THE PRESSURE

With all types of chiropractic treatments for sciatica, patients will be shown follow-up exercises to do at home. Even when surgery is performed, many patients seek chiropractors for their post-surgery care.

Based on the philosophy that the body can heal itself, chiropractic care enables the body to work to its optimum performance level, and frees the spinal column and nerves to efficiently send messages out to the body.