

Piriformis Syndrome

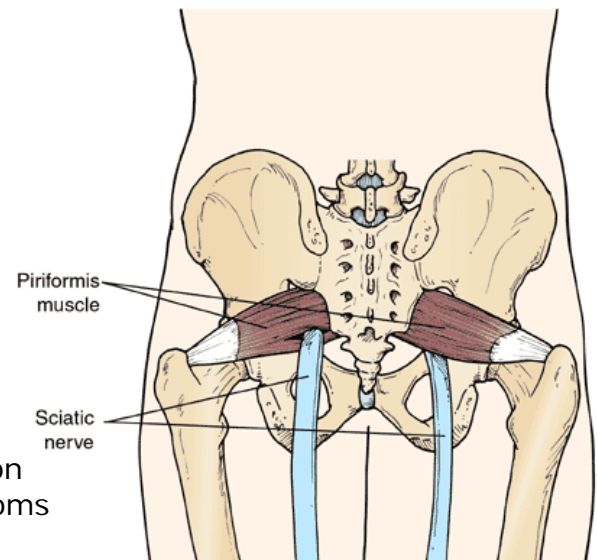
What is Piriformis Syndrome?

The Piriformis muscle is a narrow muscle in the buttock which comes from the front part of the sacrum, the triangular shaped bone at the base of the spine, and attaches to the greater trochanter of the femur (hip). This muscle rotates the hip outwards and also helps to stabilize the hip.

The Sciatic nerve, which is the largest peripheral nerve in the body, goes from the low back, through the buttocks and down the back of the thigh. In most cases the nerve passes underneath the Piriformis muscle, but in 10% of people the nerve actually pierces the belly of the muscle.

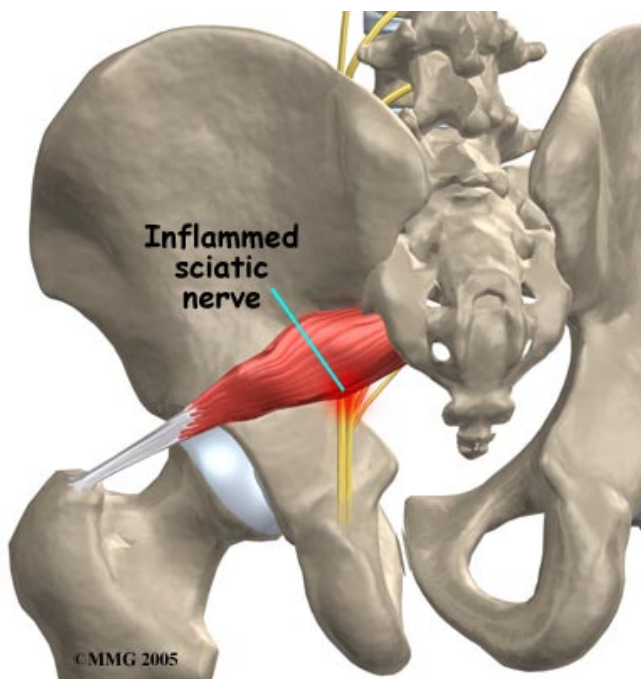
If the Piriformis muscle becomes tight, inflamed or goes into spasm, pressure will be put on the sciatic nerve. This irritation is called Piriformis Syndrome and it can cause similar symptoms to Sciatica.

Piriformis Syndrome



The sciatic nerve runs through or next to the piriformis muscle.

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What causes Piriformis syndrome?

- Irritation or inflammation of the Sciatic nerve due to tightness or spasm of the Piriformis.
- Muscle imbalance around the pelvis - weak hip abductors, tight adductors, tight ITB, hip flexion contractures
- Leg length discrepancy
- Sacro-iliac joint dysfunction
- Over-pronated feet can stress the piriformis
- Running on a cambered surface
- Running down hill
- Direct trauma - falling on the buttock
- Prolonged sitting - especially on a hard surface or in a cross-legged position

Usual symptoms include:

- Sciatic pain radiating down the back of the leg, sometimes to the foot.
- Deep buttock pain, which can be burning. (increases with sitting, walking, running, climbing stairs)
- Can occasionally cause numbness or tingling down the back of the thigh to the foot.



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What can physiotherapy do to help?

- We do a thorough assessment of your back and lower extremity to evaluate joint mobility, range, flexibility and strength.
- We use electrotherapy and/or acupuncture to relieve pain, decrease spasm and promote healing.
- We address any muscle imbalances by giving you exercises to stretch and/or strengthen.
- We mobilize joints to restore normal mobility.
- We teach you how to manage your condition.
- We advise you on return to your daily and sporting activities.



Sports Medicine Physician

Piriformis Syndrome can often mimic a herniated disc. If you have not improved with physiotherapy, a sports medicine physician can order tests such as an MRI to rule out any disc involvement. If they think that anti-inflammatory medication would be beneficial, then they can also prescribe these.