



Karuna Yoga Newsletter

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YOGA THERAPY

SCIATICA

This occurs due to compression and inflammation of the spinal nerves. A sharp pain radiates from the lower back to the leg and foot in a pattern determined by the nerve that is affected. It feels like an electric shock, and increases with standing or walking. You may only feel a dull ache deep in the fleshy part of the buttock, and it might occur only during forward bending or prolonged sitting. Although the buttock is the most common location, the pain sometimes feels as if it is coming from deep in the hip, and it may be accompanied by muscle spasms there.

Regular practice of the recommended sequence of yoga postures on page two will help relieve the pain of sciatica. Using your practice to heal the condition is possible with patience and by regularly practising the yoga postures. It is important to strengthen the muscles around the sciatic nerve and bring circulation to this region. You may find it easier to bend your knees when doing standing forward bends and in **Downward Dog** in order to rotate the pelvis forward and so alleviate the pain. Also, moving in and out of postures instead of holding for any length of time increases the circulation to the area.

Sciatica is often felt on one side only, so try doing **Janu Sirsasana (Seated Head-to-Knee Forward Bend)**. If the pain shoots from the lower back, bring the leg in toward the groin on the side you are not experiencing sciatica. If it is located more in your buttocks, bring in the leg, in which you experience the pain. If bringing one leg in still makes you suffer from the shooting nerve pain, avoid seated forward bends altogether.

Salabhasana (Locust Posture) is the best backbend for healing, because it strengthens the lower-back muscles while bringing circulation to the hip muscles. The best variation is to inhale; lift the chest and legs; exhale there. Then inhale and bring the legs apart; exhale and bring the legs back together. If lifting the feet aggravates it, then do this with the feet moving along the floor. Repeat this five times before lowering down.

Setu Bandha (Bridge Posture) is also helpful. Try alternating the distance between the feet to work different muscle groups. Try first with the feet together, then hip distance apart, and lastly with the feet and knees quite wide, keeping the inner thighs (adductors) engaged. For increased circulation, move up and down in the posture before staying stationary for a number of breaths.

Finally, remember to continue with these postures long after the symptoms have disappeared, while still avoiding seated forward bends because re-injury is very common the first few months after sciatica has healed.

ICE

Old-fashioned ice therapy numbs sore tissue and slows down inflammation. Apply an ice pack or ice wrapped in a towel (never place ice directly on the skin) to the area around your lumbar spine or wherever the pain is most intense. Do not practice any yoga postures directly after applying ice because muscles should be warm when practising yoga.

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POSTURES THAT HELP RELIEVE SCIATIC PAIN

<p>Supta Padangusthasana & Parivrtta Supta Padangusthasana Benefits – Stretches the hips, thighs, hamstrings, groins and calves. Strengthens the knees. Stimulates the prostate gland. Improves digestion. Relieves backache, sciatica, and menstrual discomfort. Therapeutic for high blood pressure, flat feet and infertility.</p> <p>If you are especially stiff or suffering with sciatica, do this posture with the heel of the bottom foot pressed against a wall.</p> <p>Contraindications – Diarrhoea. Headache. High blood pressure: raise your head and neck on a folded blanket.</p>	
<p>Adho Mukha Svanasana (downward dog). Benefits: Therapeutic for high blood pressure, asthma, flat feet, sciatica, sinusitis. Energizes the body. Stretches the shoulders, hamstrings, calves, arches, and hands. Strengthens the arms and legs. Helps prevent osteoporosis. Improves digestion. Relieves headache, insomnia, back pain, and fatigue. Contraindications: -Carpal tunnel syndrome, diarrhoea, high blood pressure or headache: - support your head on a bolster or block.</p>	
<p>Salabhasana (Locust Posture) Benefits: The best backbend for healing sciatica as it strengthens the muscles of the spine and buttocks. Also strengthens the backs of the arms and legs. Stretches the shoulders, chest, belly, and thighs. Improves posture. Contraindications: do not practise if you have a serious back or neck injury.</p>	
<p>Baddha Konasana (Fixed angle or cobbler's posture) Benefits: reduces sciatic pain. Keeps the kidneys and prostate gland healthy. Keeps the ovaries healthy. Corrects irregular menstruation. Prevents hernia. Contraindications: do not practise if you have a prolapsed uterus.</p>	
<p>Supta Baddha Konasana (reclining fixed angle posture) Benefits: relieves varicose veins and sciatica. Corrects a prolapsed uterus and has all the same benefits as Baddha Konasana. Contraindications: use support for the spine if you have lower backache.</p>	
<p>Tadasana (mountain posture) Benefits: reduces sciatic pain. Strengthens knee joints. Corrects flat feet. Prevents haemorrhoids. Improves bladder control and posture. Contraindications: If you are pregnant or have balance problems, practise with your feet about 25 cm apart.</p>	
<p>Virabhadrasana 1 (warrior 1) Benefits: relieves backache, lumbago and sciatica. Strengthens the back muscles. Tones the abdominal muscles. Improves digestion. Strengthens the bladder and corrects a displaced uterus. Relieves menstrual pain and reduces heavy bleeding. Contraindications: if you have high blood pressure, keep your hands on your hips.</p>	
<p>Parsvakonasana (extended side stretch) Benefits: relieves sciatic and arthritic pain. Reduces fat on the waist and hips. Improves digestion. Tones the muscles of the heart and enhances lung capacity. Contraindications: If you have any neck problems don't turn your head to look at the top arm; instead look straight ahead with the sides of the neck lengthened evenly, or look down at the floor.</p>	