

Diagnosing a Herniated Disc

Sciatica is a condition where the sciatic nerve is being irritated or pinched by a herniated disc in the low back. In order to do the correct exercises, you first have to self-diagnose yourself to make sure your sciatica is being caused by a herniated disc.

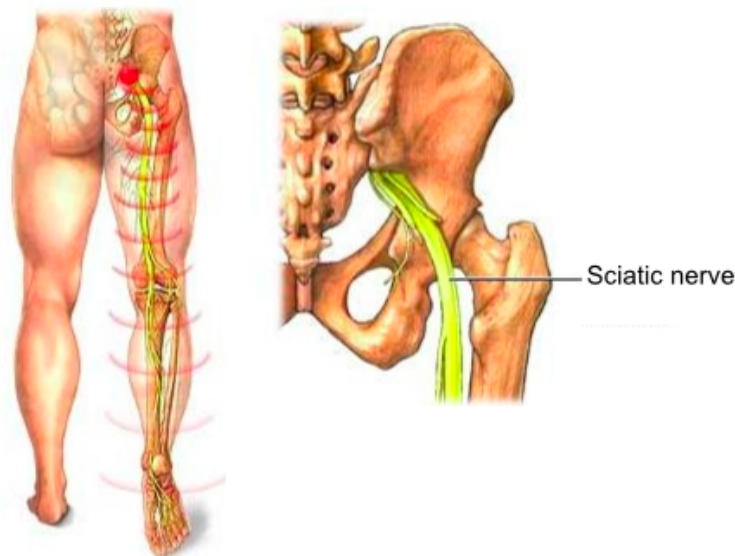
The most accurate way to obtain a diagnosis is with an MRI study, however, there are symptoms and orthopedic tests that can tell us you have a disc injury.

The symptoms with this condition are the following:

1. Weakness in the legs/feet
2. Numbness or tingling in the legs and/or feet
3. Sharp pain in the low back and glutes
4. Sharp, shock-like, shooting pain that travels down the leg(s)

Activities that may cause sharp pain in the low back and shooting pain down the legs:

1. Sneezing
2. Coughing
3. Bowel movements
4. Sitting/Driving
5. Lifting heavy objects
6. Bending forward from the waist



Orthopedic Tests

In order to know if your sciatica is being caused by a herniated disc in your low back, you need to do the following orthopedic tests. If you feel sharp, shooting pain while performing the tests, you may have a disc herniation.

Lasegue's Test

Start on your back. Lift your head until your chin is touching your chest and raise one leg with your knee bent then straighten out the leg. Repeat with the other leg. If you feel shock-like pain that travels down the leg, you are showing symptoms of sciatica caused by a herniated disc.



Straight Leg Raiser

Start on your back. Keeping your right leg straight, lift it up as far as you can. Repeat with your left leg. If you feel shock-like pain traveling down the leg, you are showing symptoms of sciatica caused by a herniated disc.



Milgram's test

Start on your back. Keeping both legs together, lift them 5 inches off the floor and hold this position for 10 seconds. If you're having sharp pain that travels down the leg(s), you're showing symptoms of sciatica caused by a herniated disc.



If you have the symptoms mentioned earlier and the pain is recreated when performing these orthopedic tests, your sciatic pain is most likely caused by a herniated disc.

Diagnosing Spinal Stenosis

Sciatica is a condition where the sciatic nerve is being irritated or pinched in the low back. In order to do the correct exercises, you first have to self-diagnose yourself to make sure your sciatica is being caused by a narrowing of the spinal canal (spinal stenosis). Spinal stenosis is a degenerative disorder (wear-and-tear) and it is **most commonly seen in people over the age of 50**.

The most accurate way to obtain a diagnosis is with an MRI study, however, there are symptoms and orthopedic tests that can tell us you have a disc injury.

The symptoms with this condition are the following:

1. Weakness in the legs/feet
2. Numbness or tingling in the legs and/or feet
3. Sharp pain in the low back and glutes
4. Sharp, shock-like, shooting pain that travels down the leg(s)

Activities that may increase sharp pain in the low back and shooting pain down the legs with spinal stenosis:

1. Standing
2. Walking
3. Standing up from a seated position

Activities that alleviate pain/sciatica with spinal stenosis:

1. Sitting
2. Bending forward at the waist

Extension / Flexion Test

In order to know if your sciatica is being caused by spinal stenosis in your low back, you need to do the following orthopedic test.

Extension Test

Stand up with your feet shoulder width apart. Now place your hands on your waist and bend your back backwards 5 times. If this movement **increases** your sciatica and low back pain, then it is a good indication that you're suffering from spinal stenosis.



Flexion Test

Stand up with your feet shoulder width apart. Now bend forward from the waist and try to touch your toes. If this movement **decreases** your sciatica and low back pain, then it is a good indication that you're suffering from spinal stenosis.



Diagnosing SI Joint Dysfunction (Sacroiliac Joint)

Sciatica is a condition where the sciatic nerve is being irritated by structures around it. In order to do the correct exercises, you first have to self-diagnose yourself to find out what is causing compression of the sciatic nerve.

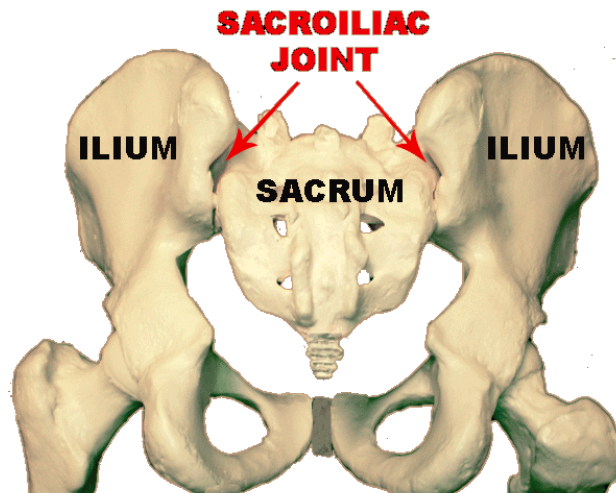
The most accurate way to obtain a diagnosis is with an MRI study, however, there are symptoms and orthopedic tests that can tell us you have SI joint dysfunction.

The symptoms with this condition are the following:

1. Weakness in the legs
2. Numbness or tingling in the legs
3. Sharp pain in the low back and glutes
4. Sharp, shock-like, shooting pain that travels down the leg(s) **BUT does NOT go past the knee**

Activities that may cause sharp pain in the low back/pelvis and shooting pain down the legs:

1. Standing for long
2. Sitting for long
3. Bending forward from the waist
4. Difficulty with transitional movements: getting out of your car, getting out of bathtub, getting out of bed, standing from a seated position, etc



Orthopedic Tests

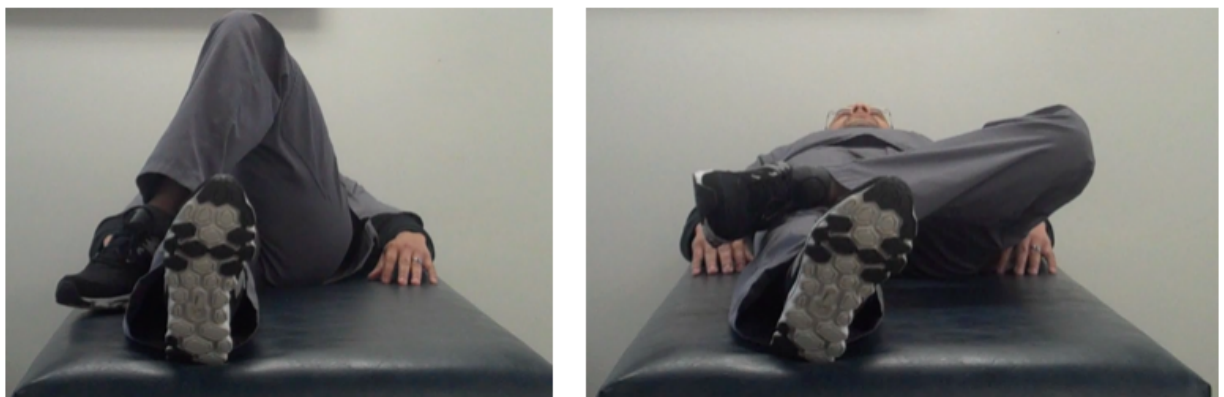
In order to know if your sciatica is being caused by a SI joint dysfunction, you need to do the following orthopedic tests. If you feel sharp, shooting pain while performing the tests, you may have SI joint dysfunction.

Straight Leg Raiser



Start on your back. Start with the unaffected leg. Lift the unaffected leg straight up pointing towards the ceiling. Relax that leg. Now repeat the same movement with the leg that hurts. If you feel shock-like pain that travels down the leg, **BUT does NOT go past the knee**, you are showing symptoms of sciatica caused by SI joint dysfunction.

Faber's Test



Start on your back. With the leg that hurts, bend your knee and cross the leg over the good leg. Now relax the leg that hurts, letting it rest against the surface you're lying on. If you feel pain in the pelvis and/or feel shock-like pain that travels down the leg **BUT**

does NOT go past the knee, you are showing symptoms of sciatica caused by SI joint dysfunction

If you have pain going down the leg, the pain increases with the activities mentioned earlier, and the pain is recreated when performing these orthopedic tests, your sciatic pain is most likely caused by SI joint dysfunction.