



# Sciatica and Radiculopathy: Causes, Symptoms, and Treatment Options

## What are Sciatica and Radiculopathy?

If you've ever experienced shooting pain down your hip or leg, you're not alone. At Desert Spine and Sports Physicians, we regularly help patients overcome spine pain and discomfort through personalized, [non-surgical treatments](#) that focus on long-term relief and prevention.

Think of your spine as an intricate highway system, with nerves acting as essential communication routes throughout your body. Sciatica occurs when there's a "traffic jam" along one of the spinal nerves in the lumbar (low back) region, causing pain in your lower back that shoots down into your hip and leg. When a lumbar nerve gets compressed or irritated, it can cause the characteristic shooting pain we call sciatica. It is important to note that sciatica doesn't actually involve the sciatic nerve, which starts in the buttock and not the back!

Radiculopathy is a broader term, essentially describing any "traffic disruption" along a spinal nerve in the cervical (neck), thoracic (mid-back), or lumbar region. While sciatica specifically involves a lumbar spinal nerve, [radiculopathy can occur anywhere along your spine](#), affecting your neck, mid-back, or lower back.

Radiculopathy can be disabling for many people, making interacting with family or working painful and difficult. Our non-surgical treatments are designed to overcome these challenges and restore your comfort.

## Causes of Sciatica and Radiculopathy

**Several factors can lead to nerve compression and irritation:**

- Herniated or protruding discs (think of these as the spine's shock absorbers becoming damaged)
- Rarely, tumors or infections
- [Spinal stenosis](#) (narrowing of the spinal canal, the space where nerves travel)
- Rarely, tumors or infections
- Arthritis involving facet joints, the paired joints on either side of the spine
- Injuries from accidents or sports activities
- Natural wear and tear leading to degenerative disc disease and bone spurs

**You might be at higher risk if you:**

- Maintain a sedentary lifestyle
- Carry excess weight
- Work in a job requiring heavy lifting
- Have a family history of spine problems
- Are over 50 years old

# What are Sciatica and Radiculopathy?

## Symptoms of Sciatica

- Sharp, burning pain that travels from your lower back through your buttocks and down your leg
- Numbness or tingling sensations, like “pins and needles”
- Muscle weakness that might make walking or standing difficult

## Symptoms of Radiculopathy

- Pain patterns that follow specific nerve pathways affecting your arm, leg, or torso
- Numbness or tingling in the arms, legs, or chest, depending on the affected area
- Muscle weakness in the limbs

# Diagnosing Sciatica and Radiculopathy

At Desert Spine and Sports Physicians, we take a comprehensive approach to diagnosis. This typically includes:

- A thorough history and physical examination to assess your symptoms; muscle strength, sensation and reflexes; and spine and musculoskeletal systems
- Advanced imaging studies when needed (X-rays, MRI, or CT scans)
- [Electrodiagnostic testing](#) to evaluate nerve and muscle function

# Non-Surgical Treatment Options for Sciatica and Radiculopathy

We believe in starting with conservative, [non-surgical treatments for radiculopathy and sciatica](#) whenever possible. Our approach includes:

- Appropriate non-opiate medications when needed
- Customized physical therapy programs
- Precisely targeted [epidural steroid injections](#)
- Lifestyle modifications and ergonomic advice

# Why Choose Desert Spine and Sports Physicians for Sciatica and Radiculopathy Treatment?

Our approach to treating sciatica and radiculopathy stands out because we focus on treating the whole person, not just the symptoms. Our [board-certified and fellowship-trained physiatrists](#) work with you to develop individualized treatment plans based on your specific needs and goals. We welcome you to explore our proven track record of helping patients return to active, fulfilling lives.

Don't let spine pain hold you back from enjoying life. Early intervention is key to preventing chronic issues and achieving the best possible outcomes. Reach out to our team today to start your journey toward relief and recovery.

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