

Yoga & Sciatica

EASTER LONG WEEKEND CLASSES

Friday Mar 25 ~ 930am & 630pm
Saturday Mar 26 ~ 930am



FOCUS:

PIGEON POSE

Sanskrit: Kapotasana

This beautiful pose stretches the shoulders and vertebral column. It also helps regulate the hormones, in particular the thyroid hormones as well as stretching out the piriformis muscle.

GAZE: Third eye

EFFECT: Energise

1. Start in downward facing dog pose. Step the left leg forward to place the foot behind the right hand and the left knee behind the left hand.
2. Slide the right leg straight back behind you as you lower both hips close to the floor. Stretch out the toes of the right foot back. Your buttock and outer left thigh will rest on the floor.
3. Decompress the lower back by lifting up through the chest. Let the front of the left thigh lengthen as the hips relax and move closer to the ground.
4. Breathe and consolidate your position.
5. Repeat on the other side.

NB. If you have difficulty in being able to relax the hips down to the floor, use a bolster, cushion or block under the left buttock for support or use blocks under the hands - see above photo. This is much softer on the knees and hands and allows you relax more.

Another option is to place the front leg on a table and perform the pose standing.

REFERENCES: 1) Brown, C. (2009) The Yoga Bible. The Bridgewater Book Company. 2) Image: http://media.yogajournal.com/wp-content/uploads/248_hp_al_01.jpg

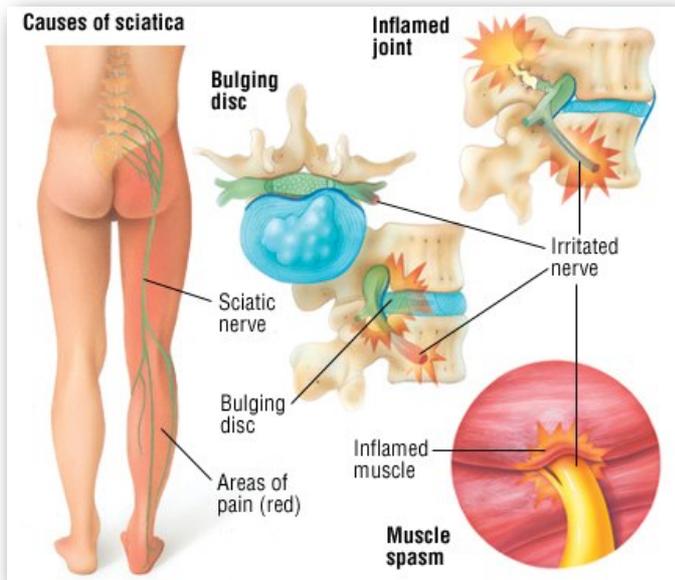
Sciatica is a painful syndrome caused by compression or irritation of the sciatic nerve. Symptoms of sciatica include:

- pain in the buttock or down the leg (i.e. back of the thigh and calf)
- pain in the ankle or foot
- numbness, pins and needles or tingling in the legs or feet
- muscular weakness in the muscles of the legs and feet
- difficulty moving or controlling the leg.

Sciatica can range from a dull ache to an incapacitating pain. Symptoms may be constant or intermittent, depending on activities or time of day. Various yoga poses can help alleviate the symptoms of sciatica

What is the Sciatic Nerve?

The sciatic nerve is the main nerve that controls sensation and function to the leg and foot. It is the largest single nerve in the body and is composed of individual nerve roots that originate from the spinal cord. These nerve roots pass out between the disc spaces of the spine in the lower back and join up to form the sciatic nerve. The sciatic nerve then passes from the spine into the buttock, then into the back of the thigh and leg. The symptoms of sciatica can vary in each individual because symptoms will be directly dependant on which part of the sciatic nerve is compressed or irritated.



What is the Cause of Sciatica?

The pain associated with sciatica can be caused by a number of underlying conditions. These may include:

- herniated (bulging) disc in the lower back
- bony growths on the spine
- arthritis in the low back or hip
- tight muscles in the buttock or trauma to the lower back
- pregnancy, due to changes in the pelvis and lower back.

What treatments are available?

Medication Management:

Topical anti-inflammatory rubs or gels may help to ease mild to moderate pain. Moderate to severe sciatic pain may require treatment with oral medications including:

- Over the counter pain relievers such as paracetamol, aspirin, or ibuprofen. Ask your pharmacist if you require stronger pain relief that contains codeine.
- Prescription muscle relaxants to ease muscle spasms.
- Antidepressants for chronic low back pain.
- Prescription strength pain medications. Some prescription medications are more targeted towards nerve pain.

Yoga & Sciatica (continued)

Non Medication Management:

Medications may help to alleviate acute pain, however, often the underlying cause will need to be addressed for effective long term management of the condition. Some tips for managing your sciatica without medication include:

- Engage in low impact exercise such as swimming, yoga and pilates to increase flexibility and back strength
- Sit and stand with good posture
- Use ergonomic furniture such as chairs with lumbar support

Yoga poses for sciatica

A targeted yoga practice can help alleviate the pain of sciatica. The majority of sciatica is caused by compression of the nerve by a muscle deep inside the hip - the piriformis. Yoga poses such as kapotasana (pigeon pose - see Focus on page 1) as well as some of the follow poses are all great to lengthen and stretch the piriformis and thus, help with sciatica.

Ardha matsyendrasana

Ensure both buttocks are connected to the ground. There is a tendency to hitch up the hip of the top leg.



Supta padangusthasana

With a towel or strap around the ball of the foot, relax the shoulders and pull top leg towards your head, keeping your leg as straight as possible. Put less strain on your lower back by bending your bottom leg and placing the foot on the floor.



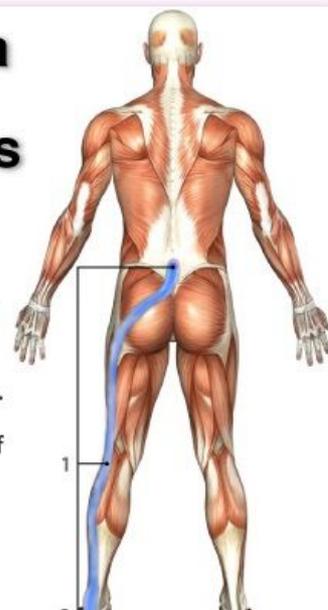
REFERENCES:

- 1) <https://yogainternational.com/article/view/7-poses-to-soothe-sciatica>
- 2) <http://yogalacrosse.com/blog/baddha-konasana-pose-week-623-629/>
- 3) http://www.a2zyoga.com/img/poses/Ardha_Matsyendrasana.jpg
- 4) <http://static1.squarespace.com/static/52d07171e4b02674e56237f9/t52df8a5ae4b065c6bc90484f/1390381658857/hamstring+stretch.jpg>
- 5) <https://montereybayholistic.wordpress.com/2013/10/>
- 6) <http://www.mendmyhip.com/sciatica-hip-pain-injury/sciatica-hip-pain-treatments.php>
- 7) osteopathy.org.au
- 8) betterhealthchannel.vic.gov.au

Sciatica Pain Patterns

1. Compression of the L4 nerve can result in pain radiating from the lower back down to the knee.

2. Compression of the S1 nerve can result in pain radiating down to the foot.



Baddha konasana

Sit on a blanket to ensure hips are forward of sitting bones. Rise up through the spine as much as possible.



Modified gomukhaasana (cow's face pose)

Place a blanket under the buttocks of the straight leg to even out the hips. Rise up through the spine as much as possible as you gently lean forward of the bent knee.

