

The Courtyard Clinic

Physical
Health

Sciatica: Poor Old Father Christmas!



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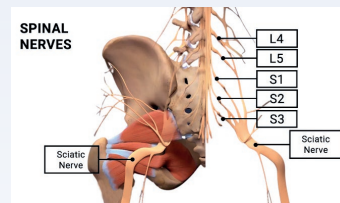
As his busiest time of year approaches, Father Christmas has done himself a mischief, and as we've helped him out a few times in the past, he has paid The Courtyard Clinic a visit for treatment again. A few weeks ago, he was lifting a freshly wrapped present when he felt a twinge on the right side of his low back.



Initially it just felt tender and achy, but by the time he woke the next morning the pain was extending from his right buttock, into the back of his thigh, back of his calf and into his foot. Since then, it has been painful to bear weight through his right leg and worse after he's been sitting down. It jars every time he laughs (so he's avoiding his belly wobbling like a bowlful of jelly!)

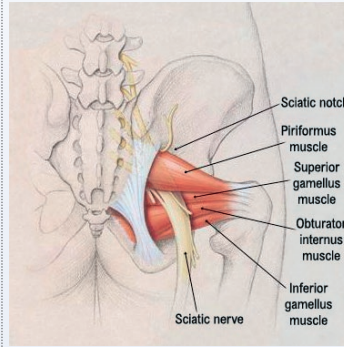
What is Sciatica?

Father Christmas' symptoms were consistent with Sciatica. The Sciatic nerve is made up of several nerve roots that emerge from the base of our spine.



It is the thickest and longest nerve in the body. True injury to the sciatic nerve is less common than you'd expect, the term "sciatica" is usually misused to describe any pain that originates in the lower back and radiates down the leg. True Sciatica will be felt through the buttock, back of the thigh, back of the calf and sole of the foot.

There are many other nerves that travel into the leg that can be injured in similar circumstances. These pains are usually caused by an irritation, inflammation, pinching or compression of a nerve in the lower back.



What Causes it?

Sciatica is only really a symptom; the term simply describes pain in the sciatic nerve. There are many ways a nerve can be provoked. At The Courtyard Clinic we often see it caused by a joint strain and associated muscle spasm. In Father Christmas' case, the Sacroiliac Joint was strained which caused the surrounding muscles to spasm, this put pressure on the sciatic nerve which led to the pain into his leg. This is sometimes described as 'Piriformis Syndrome', named for the muscle in the buttock that commonly causes the compression. Other causes include disc degeneration or bulges, spinal joint arthritis, bony spurs, fractures and tumours.

What are the Symptoms?

The symptoms of Sciatica include:

- Pain in the low back, buttock, back of the leg and foot.
- Numbness, pins and needles, or weakness in the low back, buttock, leg or feet.

If the root problem begins to put pressure on the spinal cord it can cause a loss of bowel and bladder control (Cauda Equina Syndrome). Cauda Equina Syndrome is a medical emergency that calls for urgent

surgical intervention. If patients with Cauda Equina Syndrome do not receive treatment quickly, adverse results can include paralysis, impaired bladder and bowel control, difficulty walking, and other neurological and physical problems.

How is it Treated?

In Father Christmas' case, quite easily. It was sore for a few days but once we had managed to improve the flexibility in the area and calm the muscle spasms down, it eased quickly. He needs to do some regular stretches and exercises to build the stability and flexibility in the area, we've also given him some advice on lifting correctly. He's feeling much better and looking forward to the big night!

Have a brilliant time this Christmas. However, through past experience here are some annual reminders of the activities where Father Christmas advises caution!

- Over-competitive Dads beware! Games like Twister can be dangerous for the spine as it involves lots of bending and twisting in awkward positions. Play the games and have fun but take care! Let the kids win a few!
- At this time of year we see lots of injuries from bending, lifting and carrying. Everything from shopping bags (make sure you distribute the weight evenly) to taking the turkey out the oven can cause strain. Try not to carry too much. Keep a straight back and lift with your knees.
- Take care when assembling the tree, decorating the house, or getting boxes of decorations out the loft and always have someone there to help where you can!

Should you need help, our Christmas opening hours are:

Sat 24th – Tue 27th December: Closed
Wed 28th December: 1.30pm – 4.30pm
Thu 29th December: 9am – 1pm
Fri 30th December: 10am – 2pm
Sat 31st December: 9am – 1pm
Sun 1st & Mon 2nd January: Closed
Tue 3rd January: Open as usual

The Courtyard Clinic - Osteopathy, Physiotherapy, Massage Therapy, Podiatry/Chiropody



Patrick Murphy
Registered
Osteopath



Jamie Lauder
Registered
Osteopath



Ben Brown
Registered
Osteopath



Jack Kirby
Registered Podiatrist/
Chiropodist



Wendy David
Sports & Remedial
Massage Therapist



Vicky Duerden
Chartered
Physiotherapist

The Courtyard Clinic: 1, The Old Cutting Rooms, Church Walk, High St, Maldon - Tel: 01621 842 750

Clinic Opening Hours: Monday - Friday 8am to 7pm & Saturday 9am to 2pm

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