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A Guide To Exercises for Sciatica

Why Exercise is Important

Many doctors, physical therapists and other health practitioners recommend exercises for sciatica treatment and prevention. While bed rest or inactivity might be advised for the first day or so, extended activity allows the muscles to weaken and the pain can become worse. Sciatica exercises help to strengthen and stretch the muscles that support the back, alleviating the pressure on the sciatic nerve. Exercises for sciatica can also be beneficial in increasing circulation, which in turn provides oxygen and other nutrients to the discs in the spine, keeping them supple and healthy.

Exercises for sciatica fall under three main categories: strengthening and stabilizing, stretching, and general conditioning. Including sciatica exercises from all three categories works synergistically to decrease the pressure on the sciatic nerve and can reduce the pain significantly. Many of the suggested exercises for sciatica target the muscles supporting the abdomen, back and torso, commonly referred to as the "core" muscles.

Examples of Sciatica Exercises

In the most acute phase of sciatica, many practitioners recommend only performing exercises to the point of discomfort. Pushing to the point of pain may only cause more injury and further delay healing. An individual may only be able to do the most basic of exercises for sciatica. Three of the most common exercises recommended for this phase are the pelvic tilt, lying prone, and hugging one or both knees to the chest. The pelvic tilt is performed lying on the back with the knees bent and contracting the abdominal muscles. Lying prone can be as simple as lying on the stomach with a pillow supporting the hips. Once there is more improvement, the head and torso can be lifted as well. The last exercise is done while lying on the back and bending the knee to the chest. All of these exercises for sciatica should be done carefully and only if there is no pain.

Target specific areas


Targeting exercises to the root cause of the sciatic episode will help the condition more quickly. Multiple diagnosed conditions can cause sciatica. For instance, the two most common causes affect two different areas of the body. A herniated disc will compress the sciatic nerve in the lower part of the spine, while in piriformis syndrome the nerve becomes irritated by the tightness of a muscle in the hip flexor region. A trained health practitioner can help the sufferer to develop exercises for sciatica which will most effectively treat the condition.

Prevent Future Episodes

Once the pain has significantly subsided, many different types of sciatica exercises can help to further treat and prevent future episodes. Pilates, a program designed by Joseph H. Pilates, targets the core muscles through specific body and breathing exercises. Yoga is another discipline which helps to strengthen and stretch the muscles and spine. Physical therapists often have their patients perform exercises on a big balance ball. Keeping the ball stable works the core muscles that support the spine. Other exercises for sciatica can include swimming, walking and other low impact aerobic movements. Minimizing recurrences of sciatica can be as simple as doing exercises for sciatica on daily basis.

Learn more about SciaticaGuide.com exercises for sciatica and treatment methods at our free resource: SciaticaGuide.com

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