

Aromatherapy and Sciatica

What is Sciatica?

Sciatica is common type of pain affecting the sciatic nerve, a large nerve extending from the lower back down the back of each leg.

Sciatica is when the sciatic nerve, which runs from your hips to your feet, is irritated. It usually gets better in 4 to 6 weeks but can last longer.

Sciatica usually affects only one side of the lower body. Often, the pain extends from the lower back all the way through the back of the thigh and down through the leg. Depending on where the sciatic nerve is affected, the pain may also extend to the foot or toes.

Common symptoms of sciatic include:

- Lower back pain
- Pain in the rear of leg that is worse when sitting
- Hip pain
- Burning or tingling down the leg
- Weakness, numbness, or difficulty moving the leg or foot
- A shooting pain that makes it difficult to stand up

Your symptoms may be worse when moving, sneezing or coughing. You may also have back pain, but this isn't usually as bad as the pain in your bottom, legs or feet.

What causes of Sciatica?

Sciatica is caused by irritation of the root(s) of the lower lumbar and lumbosacral spine.

Additional common causes of sciatica include:

- Lumbar spinal stenosis (narrowing of the spinal canal in the lower back)
- Degenerative disc disease (breakdown of discs, which act as cushions between the vertebrae)
- Spondylolisthesis (a condition in which one vertebra slips forward over another one)
- Pregnancy
- Muscle spasm in the back or buttocks
- A back injury

How you can ease the pain yourself

Sciatica usually gets better in 4 to 6 weeks but a sometimes last longer. To help relieve your pain and speed up your recovery:

Do

- ✓ Carry on with your normal activities as much as possible
- ✓ Regular back stretches
- ✓ Start gentle exercise as soon as you can – anything that gets you moving can help
- ✓ Hold heat packs to the painful areas – you can buy these from pharmacies
- ✓ Ask your pharmacist about painkillers that can help

Don't

- ❖ Sit or lie down for long periods – even if moving hurts, it's not harmful and can help you get better faster
- ❖ Take paracetamol on its own – this doesn't help with back pain or sciatica
- ❖ Use hot water bottles to ease the pain- you could scald yourself if your skin is numb

See a GP if the pain:

- Hasn't improved after trying home treatments for a few weeks
- It is getting worse
- It is stopping you doing your normal activities

Treatments from a GP

Your GP may:

- Suggest exercises and stretches
- Prescribe painkillers that help with nerve pain like sciatica

How to stop sciatica coming back

To reduce the chances of getting sciatica again:

Do

- ✓ Stay active – take regular exercise
- ✓ Use a safe technique when lifting heavy objects
- ✓ Make sure you have a good posture when sitting and standing
- ✓ Sit correctly when using a computer
- ✓ Lose weight if you're overweight

Don't

- ❖ Smoke – smoking can increase your risk of getting sciatica

For more information please visit www.nhs.uk

How aromatherapy helps for Sciatica?

The pain of sciatica is a symptom, and treating the pain alone is no treatment. The cause must be found and treated too. This will often involve and obviously chairs, and posture need to be looked at. While the pain is bad, massage is not advisable but cold compresses over the painful area with essential oils will reduce the irritation and lessen the pain. Gentle massage with either of these oils at times when there is less, or no pain can be very beneficial, and baths can help too.

Essential oils which can be used for Sciatica conditions:

Essential Oils suggestion for Sciatica

- Angelica oil (*Angelica archanelelica*)
- Aniseed oil (*Pimpinella Anisum*)
- Basil oil (*Ocimum basilicum*)
- Black pepper oil (*Piper nigrum*)
- Borneol oil (*Dryobalanops aromatica*)
- Cardamom oil (*Elettaria cardamomum*)
- Celery seed oil (*Apium graveolens*)
- Citronella oil (*Cymbopogon nardus*)

- Clary sage oil (*Salvia sclarea*)
- Coriander oil (*Coriandrum sativum*)
- Eucalyptus oil (*Eucalyptus globulus* var. *globulus* and *Eucalyptus dives* var. *Type*)
- Frankincense oil (*Boswellia carteri*)
- Geranium oil (*Pelargonium graveolens*)
- Ginger oil (*Zingiber officinalis*)
- Grapefruit oil (*Citrus x paradise*)
- Helichrysum oil (*Helichrysum angustifolium*)
- Juniper berry oil (*Juniperus communis*)
- Lavender oil (*Lavandula angustifolia*)
- Linden Blossom oil (*Tilia europaea*)
- Marjoram oil (*Origanum majorana*)
- Mastic oil (*Pistacia lentiscus*)
- Nutmeg oil (*Myristica fragrans*)
- Patchouli oil (*Pogostemon cablin*)
- Peppermint oil (*Mentha x piperita*)
- Pine oil (*Pinus sylvestris*)
- Roman Chamomile oil (*Chamaemulum nobile*)
- Rosemary oil (*Rosmarinus officinalis*)
- Sandalwood oil (*Santalum album*)
- St John's wort oil (*Hypericum perforatum*)
- Sweet Fennel oil (*Foeniculum vulgare*)
- Sweet Thyme oil (*Thymus vulgaris*)
- Terebinth oil (*Pinus laricio* or *nigra*, *Pinus maritima* or *pinaster*, *pinus sylvestris*, *Pinus palustris*, *Abies pectinata* or *alba*, *Pistachia terebinthus*)
- West Indian Bay oil (*Pimenta racemosa*)
- Wintergreen oil (*Gaultheria procumbens*)

Always contact a qualified Aromatherapist who will guide you on the oils that are suitable for your individual needs.

Reference:

- The Practice of Aromatherapy: Jean Valnet
- Fragrance and Wellbeing: Plant aromatics and Their Influence on The Psyche, Rhind, Jennifer Peace
- The Directory of Essential Oils, Sellar, Wanda
- Aromatherapy for Health Professionals – Elsevieron Vitalsource (Price, aromatherapy for Health Professionals) Len Price, Shirley Price



- Aromatherapy an A-Z: The most comprehensive guide to Aromatherapy ever published, Davis, Patricia
- Essential oils: A Handbook for Aromatherapy Practice, Rhind, Jennifer Peace
- Essential oils: A Beginners Guide for Cure common ailments using essential oil, Mlhem, Sandra K.
- Aromatherapeutic Blending: Essential oils in Synergy, Rhind, Jennifer Peace
- Essential Chemistry for Aromatherapy – Elsevier on VitalSource, Clarke, Sue
- The Complete Guide to Clinical Aromatherapy and Essential Oils of The Physical Body: Essential Oils for Beginners (The Secret Healer Book 1), Ashley, Elizabeth
- Ayurveda & Aromatherapy: The Earth Essential Guide to Ancient Wisdom and Modern Healing, Miller, Dr. Light; Miller, Dr. Bryan; Diamond, Harvey
- The encyclopedia of Essential Oils, Julia Lawless
- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Sciatica>
- <https://www.webmd.com/back-pain/guide/sciatica-symptoms>

To find a practitioner to discuss your needs [click here](#)