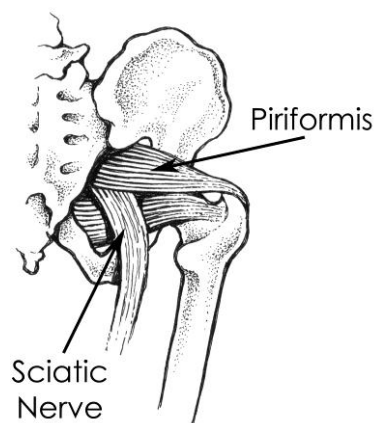


## 'A tight piriformis muscle & sciatica' by Paul Boxcer

The piriformis muscle (a fairly large muscle situated deep in the buttock region) is responsible for much low back pain and sciatica suffered by the general population, especially when it is tight. Therefore today I thought I would talk about how this muscle, when tight, can result in sciatica and also how you can begin stretching it to help alleviate any signs and symptoms you may be suffering with.

The piriformis muscle, as I mentioned above, is positioned deep in your buttock region, as shown in the image below. You will also see in that image how the sciatic nerve, which originates from the nerve roots of the lower back/sacrum, passes underneath the piriformis muscle (in some people it actually passes through the muscle belly itself). Therefore, if this muscle is tight, you can probably imagine how it may begin to aggravate the sciatic nerve and lead to sciatica.



NB: Just a brief note on sciatica, it is important that I state here that the term 'sciatica' is a descriptive one and not a diagnostic one. Basically, anything which aggravates the sciatic nerve and leads to pain (anywhere from the lower back down to the foot and toes) can be classed as 'sciatica' regardless of what causes it. Therefore there is no one treatment as such for sciatica, as it will all depend upon the cause. Consequently, one treatment or exercise which helps to ease one cause of sciatica may actually aggravate another person's sciatica if it has a different cause. As mentioned at the top of this article, I will be talking about sciatica caused by a tight piriformis muscle.

If a tight Piriformis muscle is causing your sciatica, the pain will typically start in and around the buttock area and then radiate anywhere from your buttock, down the back of the leg and into your foot. This is because the sciatic nerve passes through the buttock (underneath or through the piriformis muscle) down the back of the leg towards the knee. Once it actually passes below the knee it is no longer the sciatic nerve, rather it divides into other peripheral nerves which have different names. However, it is widely accepted that the term sciatica can be given to pain which passes below the knee and as far as the foot/toes.

If the tightness in this piriformis muscle is severe enough, it may even begin to compromise the impulses which pass along the nerve, consequently, pins & needles/numbness may result or even weakness in any of the muscles that the sciatic nerve or its branches supply.

If you are presenting with signs and symptoms which you feel may be a result of a tight piriformis muscle, then beginning with a gentle course of piriformis stretching exercises will be a good way to start resolving your pain (as long as you take it easy to begin with and ease off if you feel they are aggravating any of your signs and symptoms at all).

I will now go on to describe one of the gentler stretches for the piriformis muscle...

### **Piriformis Stretch.**

Lying on your back with both knees bent, gently place the ankle of the side to be stretched upon your opposite knee. Then place the hand of the same side to be stretched on your knee as shown and gently push your knee away from you.



### **Schedule:**

**Hold:** 20 - 30 seconds

**Reps:** 2 - 3

**Times per Day:** 2 - 3

With this stretch, you should be looking for a stretching sensation in the region of your buttock, however you may find the stretch passes a little further down the leg or even into your lower back. As long as it is only a stretching sensation then this is no problem. You should feel no pain though.

**NB.** If you find it difficult to even place your ankle upon your opposite knee as shown above, this implies your piriformis muscle is likely to be extremely tight. Therefore there is even more reason for you to need to stretch this muscle, however you need to be careful as you may easily aggravate the pain you are suffering with. Therefore I would suggest you try straightening the opposite leg of the side being stretched a little further, as this will place less stress across the piriformis muscle.

The above stretch is just one of several you can try in order to loosen up your piriformis muscle. If it is tightness in this muscle which is causing your signs and symptoms, you will definitely need to consider stretching it. If you wish to try a slightly firmer stretch, take a look at the other piriformis stretch given here: [view Piriformis Stretch 2](#).

It is important I reinforce that which I said at the beginning of this article, sciatica has many causes and if it is not a tight piriformis muscle which is causing your pain but rather something else, then piriformis stretches could possibly aggravate your pain, so be careful with these exercises and if they do begin to aggravate any of your signs and symptoms, ease off or stop them altogether.

Also, although it may be a tight piriformis that is causing your pain, there may be another underlying reason as to why the piriformis muscle is tight in the first place (it may be compensating for weakness elsewhere for example) therefore other exercises may need to be incorporated into your exercise programme as well as a piriformis stretch.

However, the most important thing is that if the piriformis muscle is tight, it will need stretching and there are many occasions when simply stretching this muscle alone is suffice to ease or completely alleviate the signs and symptoms of sciatica. Therefore be careful, but give the above stretch a go. If you feel this is not really a 'hard enough' stretch, try to step it up a little with another I have on my website: [view website](#).

That's about it for today. As always this article will be on my blog which can be seen [here](#).

Please feel free to visit my blog and comment upon this article and/or provide suggestions for future article and blogs.

Oh, just before I go, I want to let you know that this is the last chance to purchase ***Low Back Pain & Sciatica – A Personalised Treatment Approach*** for the discounted price of £13.97. This 50% discount will only be available until this coming Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> September. After that, it will return to the price on my website, which is currently £23.97.

Therefore, if you want to take this last opportunity to purchase my book for £13.97, please use this link [www.spinal-health-care.com/The-Back-Pain-Show](http://www.spinal-health-care.com/The-Back-Pain-Show) and grab this special offer while it's still available.

Many thanks as always.

Take Care & Good Luck,

Paul.