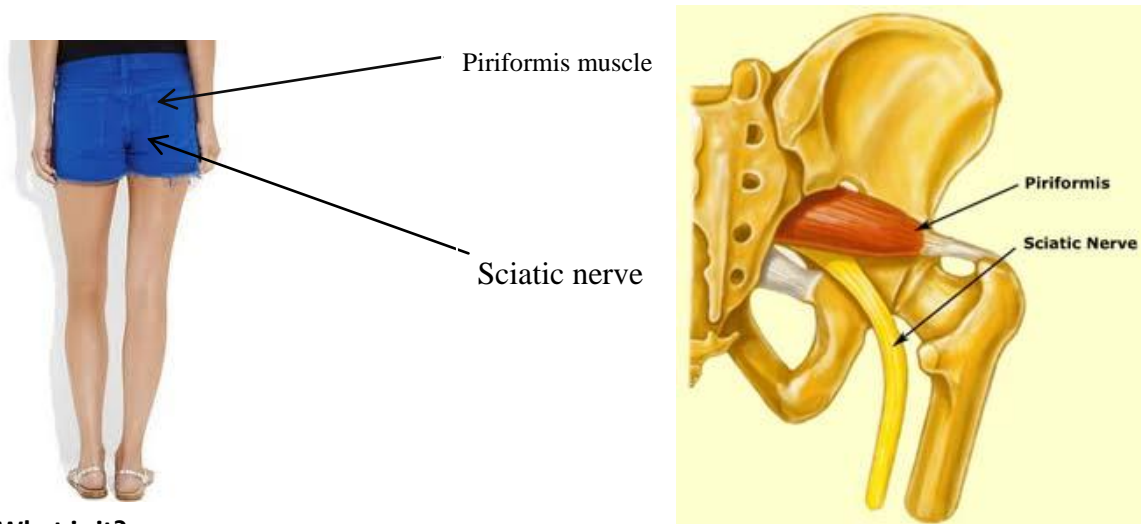


Piriformis Syndrome Information Sheet



What is it?

The “Piriformis muscle” is located in the buttock region and if it compresses the Sciatic Nerve (which runs close to the muscle) it can cause symptoms along the back of the leg and into the foot similar to nerve compression that can occur in some lower back problems. This is usually known as “Piriformis Syndrome” but may be described as “Sciatica” by some health care professionals. “Sciatica” is a general term that means the sciatic nerve is compressed or irritated but does not diagnose which structure is compressing the nerve. It is therefore a very general term.

The sciatic nerve runs either beneath or in a small percentage of the population, through the Piriformis muscle. (Estimated at 10% of the population – Brukner and Khan 2007) The Piriformis muscle can create pressure on the sciatic nerve resulting in lower back pain, pain in the buttock and pain numbness and tingling along the sciatic nerve which runs down the back of the leg.

Structures in your lower back can also result in very similar symptoms to those described above, which makes the diagnosis of the origin of pain extremely important. Correct treatment must be targeted at the right structure to ensure the relief of symptoms. Research from the United States estimates that Piriformis syndrome is responsible for only 6% of cases describing the symptoms detailed above, with the majority originating from the lower back.

Why?

It is thought that when the muscle is overused or subjected to trauma it can cause the muscle to shorten or spasm and therefore it can compress or strangle the sciatic nerve. It can also be related to intense downhill running.

Symptoms

Most commonly patients describe tenderness in the buttock with associated sciatic pain down the back of the thigh. Typical symptoms may include:-

- A dull ache/burning in the mid buttock
- Pain down the back of the leg
- Pain when walking up stairs or inclines
- Increased pain after prolonged sitting

Symptoms may feel easier after lying down on your back or changing position.

Treatment

Once your Physiotherapist has established the origin of symptoms the treatment will aim to release the Piriformis muscle (and other soft tissue that may be restricting the nerve) and in turn the nerve structure responsible for your pain. Treatment/advice that you may receive will be a combination of the following;

- Stretches: Primarily for the Piriformis and hamstrings muscles. This may help to decrease the symptoms along the sciatic nerve and hopefully return the patients range of movement.
- Advice on the use of Ice and heat.
- Physiotherapy: Manual Therapy (manipulation, mobilisation of your hip and surrounding soft tissue) Acupuncture/Dry needling, Exercises and in some cases Electrotherapy.
- Medication: Over the counter drugs like Ibuprofen or Paracetamol may help reduce the symptoms.
- In severe cases a steroid injection may be required.

For more information on this condition and to arrange an appointment for treatment please do not hesitate to contact Advance Physiotherapy on 0115 945 5232.

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