



fifth ave physiotherapy

## PAIN IN THE BUTT!

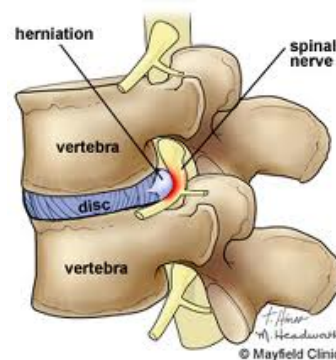


Being a pianist has many challenges and rewards - making music is obviously the most satisfying one! Physical demands of the piano - be it lifting, playing or judging can be demanding to your body and we are here to examine one of the most common complaints.

Pain in the butt is less amusing than it sounds... and the predominate contributor is the **Sciatic nerve**

### Anatomy of the Sciatic Nerve:

The sciatic nerve derives from your lumbar spine (low back) at the L4-S3 spinal nerve levels. When this nerve is affected, it can produce pain, tingling, numbness and weakness in the low back, buttocks, down the leg and into the foot. It can also create abnormal reflexes in the lower limbs.



### Sciatic Nerve Pain:

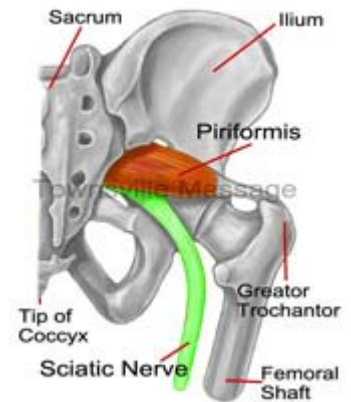
The distribution of sciatic nerve pain is shown on the right. Typical causes for sciatic nerve pain can include:

- 1) *Irritation of the nerve* as a result of a thinning disc/ arthritis in the spinal joints (both can be as a result of aging or injury) or by disc protrusion when the disc breaks down and interferes/compresses the nerve. Most disc breakdowns are a result of lifting. However, sitting poorly for prolonged periods of time has the same effect as a slouched position essentially pushes the disc backwards onto the opening where the nerve emerges.



2) *Piriformis syndrome* -the piriformis is a hip rotator muscle located in the buttocks. When it is inflamed or excessively tight, it can compress on the sciatic nerve as it travels through the muscle causing "sciatic nerve-like" symptoms. In most cases, there is a history of trauma to the area or repetitive, prolonged and/or vigorous activity involving this muscle e.g. long distance running, prolonged sitting etc. Other contributing factors can include:

- osteoarthritis of the hip
- hypermobility (excess mobility)of the SIJ (sacroiliac joint). In this instance the piriformis will overwork to provide stability. This hypermobility is frequently caused by injury (falls, car accidents) or pregnancy
- Low back (lumbar spine) irritation at the sciatic nerve level



### Diagnosis, Treatment & Prevention:

A correct diagnosis is essential to the management of “pain in the butt”, be it hip problems, low back issues or piriformis syndrome. This will involve a thorough assessment of your low back and hips to determine where the pain is coming from. Local treatment to the area will only provide short term relief if the origin is not established.

Understanding the condition will also help prevent its reoccurrence. Successful physiotherapy treatments may include local techniques to improve joint and muscle function. This can be in the form of needling (IMS or acupuncture), joint mobilization or manipulation, traction, education/postural advice and self-management (stretches and core exercises). When disc/joint deterioration is extreme and there is loss of reflexes, sensation or strength, surgery may be required.



Good posture requires flexibility and core strength in both shoulder & pelvic cores.  
Somewhere with all the variables, *we must be able to find a good compromise!*