

bad leg cramp that lasts for weeks before it goes away. Sitting, sneezing, or coughing can send you into agony. You may also have weakness, "pins and needles" numbness, or a burning or tingling sensation down your leg.

Symptoms vary because the cause varies in each patient. "Some of these causes are simple; some are more dangerous, like a herniated or ruptured disk," says Martin. "Nearly always, irritation of the sciatic nerve comes from a problem in the spine or pelvis. The best doctor to evaluate what kind of sciatica a person has is a doctor of chiropractic."

"Like the visible part of an iceberg, symptoms are obvious," says Dr. Jared Simon, Atlanta, GA. "Yet there can be years of hidden and undetected spinal problems."

REFERRED PAIN

Why treat your sacroiliac injury right away? Besides getting pain relief, there is a possibility the injury can radiate to other areas of the body. "We want to determine if muscle spasm is creating ridiculer pain, or creating the pain itself," said Dr. Todd Warner Johnson, Warner Chiropractic, Fort Meyers, FL. "I take x-rays to determine that there is nothing under the surface that can mimic something else that may be a greater

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problem down the road."

Martin agrees that ignoring sciatica is risky in the long run. "It can result in permanent nerve damage, muscle weakness, disk degeneration, arthritis or other degenerative conditions."

Chiropractors also recommend exercise, specifically passive stretching or use of a gym ball that provides pelvic stability to protect the sacroiliac joint area. Walking is also touted as a means to heal sacroiliac injuries. Dr. Donald



Hayes, president of Wellness Watcher, a Boca Raton, FL. based nutrition company recommends walking 15 to 20 minutes every day at a regular pace to

help heal sacroiliac injury. "Go outside and take a leisurely walk, which is the overall best exercise for the sacroiliac joint," he says.

BACK TO NORMAL

Chiropractic adjustment realigns the vertebrae and the sacrum allowing the body to heal itself and function properly. "The relief in the first few visits depends on what is causing the sciatica," says Martin, who was named this year's

Texas Chiropractor of the Year. "In simple cases, early relief can be significant. In more serious conditions, such as a herniated disk, it can take several visits before relief begins to occur."

All chiropractors agree that ongoing chiropractic care maintains the body's ability to retain good function. Since an injured area like the sacrum may remain a weak link, ongoing care is vital.

Dr. Patrick Bodnar is an assistant professor for Parker College of Chiropractic, Dallas, TX. and a team teacher at Parker Seminars. He says, **"By maintaining the motion of the spine and other joints, agility, balance, strength, endurance and flexibility, you can create a fantastic strategic foundation for not only getting more years out of your life, but more life from your years."**