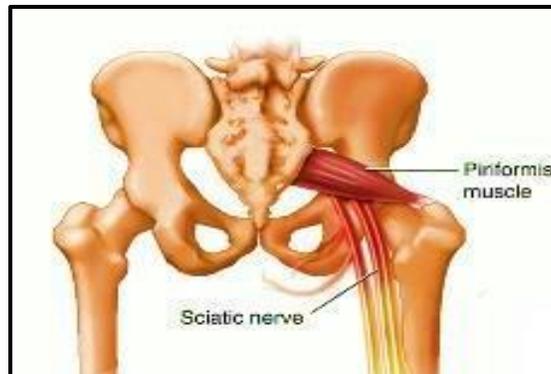


Piriformis Syndrome: the literal “pain in my butt”

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Aside from the monotony of day-to-day pains and annoyances, piriformis syndrome is the literal “pain in my butt” that may not go away with sending the kids to grandmas and often takes the form of sciatica. Many individuals with pain in the buttock that radiates down the leg are experiencing a form of sciatica caused by irritation of the spinal nerves in or near the lumbar spine (1). Other times though, the nerve irritation is not in the spine but further down the leg due to a pesky muscle called the piriformis, hence “piriformis syndrome”.

The piriformis muscle is a flat, pyramidal-shaped muscle that originates from the front surface of the sacrum and the joint capsule of the sacroiliac joint (SI joint) and is located deep in the gluteal tissue (2). The piriformis travels through the greater sciatic foramen and attaches to the upper surface of the greater trochanter (or top of the hip bone) *while the sciatic nerve runs under (and sometimes through) the piriformis muscle as it exits the pelvis*. Due to this close proximity between the piriformis muscle and the sciatic nerve, if there is excessive tension (tightness), spasm, or inflammation of the piriformis muscle this can cause irritation to the sciatic nerve leading to symptoms of sciatica (pain down the leg) (1). Activities like sitting on hard surfaces, crouching down, walking or running for long distances, and climbing stairs can all increase symptoms (2) with the most common symptom being tenderness along the piriformis muscle (deep in the gluteal region) upon palpation.

If you are experiencing pain radiating from the back of the thigh to some or all of the leg (and even possibly the foot) it is important to rule out other possibilities such as a herniated disc before physical therapy treatment can begin. Once a differential diagnosis has been determined there are many ways we can help you through physical therapy here at Genesee Valley Physical Therapy. For example, manual treatment and modalities such as ultrasound can help reduce pain, spasm and inflammation in the beginning stages followed by progressive piriformis stretching to provide flexibility. From there,

progression to strengthening (especially to the gluteus medius muscle) is an important step in order to further improve function.

Please come see one of our many wonderful therapists if any of these symptoms relate to you (no script needed through direct access!) so that you can finally rid yourself of that nagging “pain in my butt.”

References

1. EOrthopod. Piriformis syndrome [Internet]. Medical Multi-Media Group; 2006 Jul 20.
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2. Parlak A, Aytekin A, Develi S, Ekinci S. Piriformis syndrome: A case with non-discogenic sciatalgia. *Turkish neurosurgery*. 2014;24(1):117-119

