Piriformis Syndrome

Piriformis syndrome is a rare neuromuscular disorder. It happens when the piriformis muscle compresses or irritates the sciatic nerve. This is the largest nerve in the body. The piriformis muscle is a narrow muscle. It is located in the buttocks.

SYMPTOMS

Compression of the sciatic nerve causes pain. It is often described as tingling or numbness:

- In the buttocks.
- Along the nerve.
- Down to the leg.

The pain may get worse as a result of:

- Sitting for a long period of time.
- Climbing stairs.
- Walking or running.

TREATMENT

Generally, treatment for the disorder begins with stretching exercises and massage. Anti-inflammatory drugs may be prescribed. A patient may be advised to stop running, bicycling, or similar activities. A corticosteroid injection near where the piriformis muscle and the sciatic nerve meet may provide temporary relief. In some cases, surgery is recommended.

The outcome for most individuals with this syndrome is good. Once symptoms of the disorder are addressed, individuals can usually resume their normal activities. In some cases, exercise regimens may need to be modified. This is in order to reduce the likelihood of recurrence or worsening.

RESEARCH BEING DONE

Within the NINDS research programs, this syndrome is addressed through studies associated with pain research. NINDS pursues a research program that seeks new treatments for pain and nerve damage. The ultimate goal is to reverse debilitating conditions such as piriformis syndrome.

Research is continually being done to learn more about this problem.

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