



What **Not** To Do When You Have Sciatica & Back Pain

PAINFREE
FITNESS

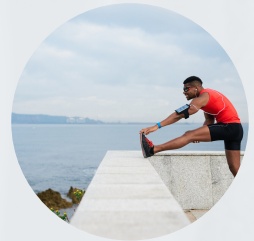


“Flat” Back Posture

Somewhere along the way you were told to keep a flat back posture with exercise, standing and sitting. If you weren't coached into this posture you gradually adopted a flat back or slightly rounded lower back posture before or after your pain started. This is a sure fire way to make your back and Sciatic nerve SUPER angry. Some degree of curvature (hollow) is naturally built into your lower back. Respecting this posture will prevent back pain and keep your Sciatic nerve from being compressed.

Stretching Your Hamstrings

This may feel good in the moment, but it is really stressing your Sciatic nerve in a way that is going to exacerbate the pain in the long run. An already angry nerve doesn't like to be tugged on! If stretching were the secret formula for getting better you would not be here. And honestly, I've met almost no one who has contributed stretching to relief from Sciatica pain. Interestingly, some of the most flexible people are the ones coming into my clinic complaining of back pain and Sciatica.



Self Back “Cracking”

Sciatica is often triggered by an injury to a disc in your back. With disc injury comes a little bit of instability in the lower back. This instability is often to blame for your back “locking up” or muscle spasms with even the most subtle movements. We want to strengthen and stabilize your lower back, NOT make it more flexible. Your back “cracking” might feel good for a second, but it is only a temporary solution that leads to more chronic pain over time.

Stretching Your Lower Back

Many think their “tight back” is causing their Sciatica and take steps to become more flexible in that area.

In reality your tight back is only a symptom not the cause. Stiffness in the hamstrings, back and butt muscles are often because of an irritated disc and Sciatic nerve. You are not going to stretch the pain away. Think of your lower back more like the foundation of your house. You want it strong, stable and secure! When you start adopting this mindset and learn the proper way to move and exercise you will finally get the relief you have been looking for.



“No Pain, No Gain” Mindset

This is a great way to build mental toughness, but a TERRIBLE way to rehabilitate your lower back. You need to learn how to pace yourself appropriately when returning from a back injury. You need to think of yourself like a marathon runner rather than a sprinter. If you come off the starting line at a 4-minute mile you are going to crash and burn before you know it. Healing and pain are NOT the same thing. Asking, “how long will it take to heal?” is a totally different question than “how long will it take for the pain to go away?”. You can be Pain Free with a back that is still healing if you learn how to pace appropriately.

Crunches and Twists

I saved this one for last because I think it has become more common knowledge that these are a “no, no.” It has taken years for the Army to remove them from their Physical Fitness Test, but it finally happened. It is important to understand that the lower back is built to be STABLE, not flexible. Exercises like crunches, side crunches and Russian twists are an excellent way to injure your back. The lower back (lumbar spine) is meant to RESIST not create motion. One of the biggest mistakes I see in the gym is poor lower back posture with lower back strengthening (Core Exercise), general strengthening and cardiovascular exercise.

