



**connections**  
PHYSICAL THERAPY

**NEWSLETTER**

**GET A HEAD START TOWARD  
FREEDOM FROM  
SCIATICA**



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## GET A HEAD START TOWARD **FREEDOM FROM SCIATICA**



Have you been suffering from lower back pain that radiates into your buttocks and down your leg? You may be experiencing sciatica. At Connections Physical Therapy, our physical therapists are experts at treating sciatica and helping you find relief!

Sciatica, also referred to as “lumbar radiculopathy,” is a pain, numbness, or tingling that radiates from the lower back. The sciatic nerve extends from the lumbar spine through the area of the buttocks and down the legs into the toes, making it the largest nerve in the human body.

When this nerve becomes irritated, pain or paresthesias ensue. Typically the symptoms are felt in the lumbar area, down the leg behind the thigh and into the lower leg and foot.

The pain can make it difficult to sleep, sit, bend or walk. The most common cause of sciatica is lumbar disc herniation, but it can be caused by an injury or severe disc degeneration, as well.

Contact Connections Physical Therapy today to set up an appointment with one of our experts. We'll provide you with the relief you need to live life comfortably once again!

### **Understanding How To Treat Sciatica**

Sciatica is diagnosed through a physical therapy evaluation that includes a thorough history and physical examination. Sometimes a CT scan or MRI may be used to confirm the physical therapist's conclusions.

*Once you are diagnosed with sciatica, a physical therapist will work with you to manage and relieve the condition. This includes:*

- Reducing sciatica pain
- Improving motion
- Increasing strength
- Improving flexibility
- Educating you on how to sit, stand, bend, and twist
- Returning to normal activities

Targeted stretching and strengthening exercises are vital to treating sciatica pain. Our physical therapists will teach you an exercise program you can do at home to manage your pain.

Many exercises can help strengthen the muscles of the spinal column. Most of these exercises focus on improving your core. The core comprises muscles in the lower back, abdominals (stomach), gluteus (buttock), and hip muscles.

Strong core muscles can provide pain relief because they support the spine, keeping it in alignment and facilitating movements that extend or twist the spine with less chance of injury or damage.

Targeted stretches for sciatica are designed to target restrictions in the joints and muscles that contribute to your pain. The initial assessment will help your therapist establish what's known as a “directional preference,” meaning what helps the patient feel and move better.

Your home program will focus on improving your pain and restoring your motion so you can resume the activities you enjoy!

# COME BACK IN FOR PT!

# How A Physical Therapist Can Help You



If you're experiencing sciatica, contact one of our physical therapists immediately. Your physical therapist will perform a thorough physical examination and provide you with solutions that work based on their findings.

Your therapist will identify the best way to resolve your sciatica pain using directional preference and strengthening exercises. They will examine how you respond to specific movements and positions. These particular movements and positions become the starting point for treatment.

Next, your therapist will focus on areas where you struggle with weakness or develop compensations due to sciatica pain. These exercises will be targeting your core strength. In addition, your therapist will guide you through the postures that help alleviate your pain and minimize the risks of it returning.

As you progress and improve, your physical therapist will expand on your exercises and stretches by making them more intensive over time. This will help increase your overall strength and range of motion.

We will spend one-on-one time with you on each visit, using hands-on techniques that get the joints, muscles, and nerves moving again. We will also design a comprehensive exercise and education program to get you back to comfortably doing what you want to do.

## Call Today To Make An Appointment

Physical therapy can provide you with the treatment you need to alleviate your sciatica. If you are ready to get rid of your sciatica symptoms and enjoy your daily life free of pain, contact Connections Physical Therapy for relief.

**We'll provide you with an individualized treatment plan to help you get back to your everyday life as quickly as possible!**

Sources:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK507908/>

<https://www.apta.org/article/2020/10/08/sciatica-study>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5516132/>

## EXERCISE ESSENTIAL FORWARD BEND - LONG SITTING

Sit with legs straight out and lower back tall. Bend forward keeping lower back tall to feel a stretch in the back of your thighs. This helps with lower back pain. Hold for 20 counts and repeat as needed.

*This exercise is designed for pain prevention.  
Call your therapist if you are experiencing any pain!*



# 7 Tips For Better Heart Health!

## 1. Aim For Lucky Number Seven.

Young and middle-aged adults who sleep 7 hours a night have less calcium in their arteries (an early sign of heart disease) than those who sleep 5 hours or less or those who sleep 9 hours or more.

## 2. Keep The Pressure Off.

Get your blood pressure checked every 3-5 years if you're 18-39. If you're 40 or older, or if you have high blood pressure, check it every year.

## 3. Move More.

To keep it simple, you can aim for 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week of moderate exercise. Even if you exercise for 30 minutes a day, being sedentary for the other 23 1/2 hours is really bad for your heart.

## 4. Slash Saturated Fats.

To help your heart's arteries, cut down on saturated fats, which are mainly found in meat and full-fat dairy products. Choose leaner cuts and reduced-fat options.

## 5. Find Out If You Have Diabetes.

Millions of people don't know that they have this condition. That's risky because over time, high blood sugar damages arteries and makes heart disease more likely.

## 6. Think Beyond The Scale.

Ask your doctor if your weight is OK. If you have some pounds to lose, you'll probably want to change your eating habits and be more active.

## 7. Clean Up.

Your heart works best when it runs on clean fuel. That means lots of whole, plant-based foods (like fruits, vegetables, nuts, and seeds) and fewer refined or processed foods (like white bread, pasta, crackers, and cookies).

# STAFF SPOTLIGHTS

## TRACY MOORE PT, MSPT



Tracy graduated from MGH Institute of Health Professions in 2000 receiving her Master of Science in Physical Therapy. Initially working in the inpatient setting, Tracy found her passion in outpatient orthopedics. She joined Connections Physical Therapy in September of 2014 and has been a staple in the Pepperell community ever since. Tracy specializes in orthopedics, sports physical therapy and treating patients with vestibular disorders like BPPV, vertigo, dizziness and balance symptoms. Tracy feels it is important when treating patients with all diagnoses to have a balance between manual techniques and exercise programs. Her hobbies include hiking (especially in Bar Harbor, Maine and New Hampshire) skiing, reading, traveling and spending time with her husband and two kids.

## THOMAS MUSGROVE PT, DPT



Tom graduated from Sacred Heart University with a Bachelor in Exercise Science in 2018 and went on to receive his Doctorate in Physical Therapy in 2021. He has experience working in outpatient and inpatient settings for all orthopedic diagnoses. His areas of interest include athletes, back/neck pain, vestibular conditions, functional rehabilitation and manual therapy. Tom is extremely passionate about exercise and health since he has been a competitive crossfitter and powerlifter in the past. He also has experience in personal training and while in college, working with athletes to get them prepared for their upcoming season.

Outside of work, Tom spends most of his time attending sporting events and playing basketball and flag football with his friends. He loves to watch sports and anything Disney/Marvel related. He also enjoys cooking, baking and trying new recipes. Over the course of the pandemic, Tom learned how to make a loaf of bread from scratch!



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Call your nearest Connections  
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your next PT appointment!