



sciatica soothers

Yoga can bring relief to a common back and leg pain.

As anyone who's suffered from sciatica knows, your sciatic nerves

are not shy about getting your attention when they're irritated. The nerves, which run from your lower spine all the way down the backs of your legs, can sometimes produce a sudden, shooting pain, or at other times create a milder tingling that starts in your lower back, continues down to your calf, and intensifies when you sneeze.

Sciatic pain can have many different triggers, and yoga can help you to become aware of what those are for you, says Dina Amsterdam, founder of Inner Yoga in San Francisco. "Yoga is helpful, because the student is guided to listen to his or her own body," she says.

The sciatic nerves are the longest ones in your body, so it can be hard to identify the source of the pain. The muscles around the sacroiliac joint—the point of connection between the sacrum and the pelvis—can play a role in bringing on sciatica, says Amsterdam. The key is to try different poses and observe which bring the greatest relief.

For those suffering from sciatic pain, or seeking to prevent attacks, Amsterdam recommends a sequence, such as the one at right, that stretches the hamstrings and external hip rotators, creating space in the sacroiliac joint. She also emphasizes breathing, awareness, and being kind to yourself. "Many people's lower-back issues are related to stress," she says. "When that starts to unwind, their lower back unwinds, too." KATHERINE GRIFFIN



1

Apanasana
(Knees-to-Chest Pose)

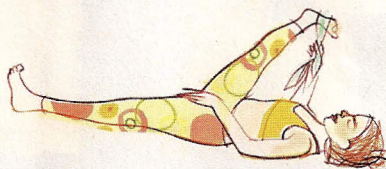
2

Sucirandhrasana
(Eye-of-the-Needle Pose)



3

Supta Padangusthasana
(Reclining Hand-to-Big-Toe Pose)



4

Eka Pada Rajakapotasana
(One-Legged King Pigeon Pose)



tune in with kindness

Start this practice by lying on your back for several minutes, with your calves resting on the seat of a chair and your hands on your belly. Take a few deep, relaxing breaths. Observe the sensation in your lower back and hips. If you're feeling intense sciatic pain, go gently with these poses, pausing often to notice how you feel. Do the four poses above for 5 to 10 breaths on each side. At the end, rest again with your calves on the chair, and notice what changes have occurred.

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