



Alternative HealthCare Solutions

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CLINICAL PEARL

How I Treat Piriformis Syndrome

I get this question a lot and I thought it might be fitting for the first “How I Treat” clinical pearl. Regardless of the actual problem, many diagnosticians still call it Piriformis Syndrome, which is fine by me, but it is very much a statement of just symptoms. I try to look at the entire picture, which involves a full structural look at the pelvis and the sacrum, as well as the lumbar spine. I tend to reject the notion that the problem starts out in the Piriformis muscle and instead, look for other causes that make the Piriformis react / adapt.

Whatever I find, be it a pelvic, sacrum or lumbar spine issue, I make sure to:

- Use [Muscle Energy Technique](#) to try to get the pelvis, sacrum and lumbar spine level and symmetrical. This usually gets functional leg length back to equal as well.
- Next I utilize counter-strain for the two main trigger points that usually implicate the piriformis. [See Treatment Protocol](#)
- I then add figure 4 stretching and exercises that utilize the lateral rotators of the hip.



- Next I discuss the use of cargo pants if the patient tends to carry a wallet in the back pocket.

- Then I suggest a 3” piece of foam that is cut to measure to the exact lower dimensions of the seat of the car. Make sure that the foam does not touch the slanted parts of the side of the seat. This raises the patient slightly and keeps the side of the bucket seat from putting pressure on the greater trochanter, a point of attachment for the piriformis.
- Sometimes, I have the patient lay on an old tennis ball directly in the Piriformis muscle, which can be a bit brutal, but usually helps a great deal.

The question of which came first, the Piriformis syndrome or the sacral asymmetry is rather difficult to answer, which is why just treating the muscle itself may only yield a temporary decrease in symptoms. This is why I treat:

- The structural issues first
- Trigger points next
- Then stretching and strengthening
- Then the perpetuating issues like wallet in back pocket and bucket seat modification.