

Targeted exercise relieves sciatica pain

April 9 2012



(HealthDay) -- Active conservative symptom-guided therapy for severe sciatica can safely reduce pain and improve neurological function at a rate that matches or surpasses outcomes from common higher-cost surgical interventions, according to a Danish study published in the April 1 issue of *Spine*.

Hanne B. Albert, P.T., Ph.D., and Claus Manniche, M.D., Ph.D., of the University of Southern Denmark in Ringe, conducted a prospective, single-blind, randomized, controlled study of 181 consecutive patients with severe sciatica. To evaluate the efficacy of active conservative treatments for relief of severe sciatica caused by a herniated disc, patients were randomly assigned to a group given symptom-guided exercise that targeted below-the-knee pain or to a group given sham exercises that improved general [blood circulation](#). Each group also received information and advice to stay active.

The researchers found that both groups of patients experienced similar reductions in leg pain at the end of treatment and at one year. For patients with severe sciatica, the symptom-guided patient exercises were superior to sham activities for improving most neurological signs after eight weeks of treatment and at one-year follow-up.

"Active [conservative treatment](#) was effective for patients who had symptoms and clinical findings that would normally qualify them for surgery," the authors write.

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Citation: Targeted exercise relieves sciatica pain (2012, April 9) retrieved 2 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-04-relieves-sciatica-pain.html>

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