

[IMAGE]

Warning: Sciatica Ahead!

Sciatica affects about five percent of adults in the United States and is one of the most common causes of chronic disability. Scientists have identified a genetic mutation that significantly raises the risk of sciatica, a common cause of back pain.

In a recent study, individuals with this gene mutation were three times more likely to have sciatica, a spinal disc disease that affects the body's largest nerve and causes pain in the lower back and legs.

This study, appearing in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, states that sciatica has been linked to environmental factors such as improper lifting and sitting for long periods. This new findings suggest that people with the genetic variation are especially vulnerable to such stresses.

The mutation is thought to damage a protein in the disk called collagen IX. This can make the disc prone to rupture, sometimes resulting in pressure on the sciatic nerve, which runs from the pelvic area down each leg. The variation can be found in a relatively simple blood test, offering a new way to diagnose sciatica which often does not show up on MRI scans.

Your doctor of chiropractic can provide you with more information on testing for and the potential causes and most effective methods of managing sciatica and other back conditions.

Reference:

Paassilta P, Lohiniva J, Perala M, et al. Identification of a novel common genetic risk factor for lumbar disk disease. *The Journal of the American Medical Association* 2001;285(14), pp. 1843-1849.

For more information on back pain, go to <http://www.chiroweb.com/find/tellmeabout/backpain.html>

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