**Nerve Root Irritation**

The accurate diagnosis of a nerve root irritation is extremely helpful for getting on the road to recovery as **quickly as possible**.    
  
Nerve root irritation can be a significant part of many conditions and is commonly left undiagnosed.  If this condition is present and not identified this often results in long delays in recovery.  There are many conditions where nerve root irritation is the **primary** cause. These conditions can include (but not limited to):

1. Back or neck pain
2. Local leg or arm pain/burning/pins & needles/numbness
3. Radiating pain/burning/pins & needles/numbness in the leg or arm
4. ‘Muscle tears’
5. ‘Tendonitis’

**Diagnosis:**

The best method for diagnosing this condition is a gentle manual assessment of the nerve which Jonathan Harris is highly skilled at performing.    
  
**Finding the underlying cause:**

Nerve root irritation can be quickly resolved with skillful musculoskeletal physiotherapy treatment to the nerve root and structures around it that are the cause of the problem.  This is done by hands on manual therapy techniques to decrease irritation of the nerve and quickly restore its free movement and reduce the symptoms.  In the vast majority of cases this can be achieved within three to four sessions, in less than a week, if you wish.    
  
The average time for this condition to settle without good care is several weeks; some won't settle without good treatment; and at the worst end of the spectrum (with loss of muscle power) surgery can be required.   
  
We successfully treat this condition on a daily basis, including the diagnosis's causing it (such as disc bulge, ligament strains, joint strains etc.).

**Is nerve root irritation the same as a Pinched Nerve?**

Nerve irritation is not to be confused with full ‘pinching’ of the nerve; this is further along the worst end of the scale.  It is known as ‘nerve root compression’ with a loss of conduction of impulses resulting in complete loss of muscle function in an arm or leg and complete loss of feeling [in the specific areas the nerve innovates in an arm or leg].  This is a rare condition, and is important to seek immediate medical care if this occurs.

**The common cause of nerve root irritation:**

Nerve root irritation most commonly results from a structure close to a nerve, such as a joint, ligament and/or muscle, which has sustained [accumulative strain](http://www.baroonaphysio.com.au/why-we-suffer-pain-pg6357.html) which results in swelling and inflammation.

**How does the body respond?**

The nerve root is a very sensitive structure and sends strong signals to the brain to let it know when it’s suffering.  The brain interprets these signals and then creates a protective response to avoid further damage to the nerve.  Everybody is different and the responses to this condition can vary.  This is another reason why this condition is tricky to identify and deal with.  The protective response is predominantly radiating pain down the arm or leg, with muscle tightness and guarding.  Sometimes the protective response is a feeling of numbness, pins and needles, tingling, cramping, tightness or an ache [like a tooth ache].

**What can I do about it?**

Firstly, **get a good assessment** to confirm the diagnosis and then receive good treatment. Nerve root irritation is problematic to deal with because it usually doesn’t follow the normal rules of “rest will make it better”!  Rest without good treatment often delays recovery significantly.  The sooner you get good treatment the sooner you can be back to normal activities. While you are in the process of receiving good treatment and having the nerve irritation released, the best thing you can do in between sessions is **avoid re-aggravation**.  This means spending as much time as possible either up and moving around or lying down (each condition is individual).

Our aim is to ensure you get back to a healthy life as soon as possible.  There aren’t many conditions where we ask you to avoid or severely limit exercise, but this may be one of them. All going to plan, you will only have to miss a few days of most of your regular life activities.  We will guide you.

**What does good treatment involve?**

We work very hard to ensure our treatment is the fastest possible method of recovery from a nerve root irritation while working towards long term prevention of recurrence of the condition.

This is not a permanent condition and with effective help you can be pain free and fully active after you have gone through the **three phases of recovery**:

**Phase 1**: Treatment to settle the Nerve Irritation until the nerve has full mobility without restriction and this mobility remains improved for more than a day (most often 2-4 sessions in a week).

**Phase 2**: Treatment to the underlying cause of the condition to get your joints, ligaments and muscles un-loaded and moving fully with no restrictions (most often 2-4 sessions in a week or two).

**Phase 3**: Gradually returning to full activities while integrating new muscle control to ensure you minimise the risk of recurrence.  In most cases this will have you performing better than you did before the condition. (most often 2-4 sessions over a few months).

The best way to remain pain free is to get regular check-ups (every 6 months) just like you would with your teeth.

**How do I know how bad the condition is and how my recovery is progressing?**

A sensitive manual therapy test that a good physiotherapist performs can measure the extent of a nerve root irritation condition.   Even with good treatment, pain may not initially respond proportionally to the rate of improvement. You may have to be patient for a few days until the treatment effect is nearly 100%. This means even if the nerve irritation is improving you may not 'feel' like it is getting better. The way to know for sure is to rely on the manual therapy test as this gives an accurate measure of progress and reveals how close you are to being fixed