

## Dr. Lipoff: Why Carrying a Wallet Could Be Causing You Pain

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Guys love their wallets like women love their purses. It is packed with business cards, store cards, and with some hard work, money. Regardless of "what's in your wallet," where you put it is more important.

The problem is that if you have a thick wallet, when you sit down it is propping up your low back on one side. This is like putting a brick under one buttock cheek, but even a ½" thick wallet could become an issue. Your pelvis gets tilted and this strains the rest of the back.

The normal posture of the lower spine is altered and becomes curved while you are sitting down. This increases the pressure on the discs and nerves unevenly, altering the muscles. The longer you sit on a wallet throughout your life the more damage you will inflict.

I see patients in my office all the time complaining of back pain, hip pain and pain in the leg because of their wallet. Often guys can develop sciatic pain due to this. Sciatica is when the nerve roots exiting the spine are compromised and cause pain down one or both legs. This is also known as a radiculopathy.

The sciatic nerve is made up of two lumbar nerves and three nerves from the triangular-shaped sacrum, which is below the lumbar spine, all at your waist. As they combine, they become the largest nerve in the body and travel down both legs, also referred to as, the lower extremities.

So the nerves supply the necessary information to your legs so you can go about your daily life. When the slightest pressure disrupts the sciatic nerve it can cause an increase or decrease in information relayed to your body.

You might feel less on one side, have weakness in some of the muscles or have a change in your reflexes. In an effort to reduce the pressure on the nerves, a person will lean away from the side of pain, known as antalgia.

A common muscle that can irritate the sciatic nerve is called the Piriformis muscle, which is located diagonally in the buttock behind your pants' "back pocket." It is connected to the outer hip and the sacrum. If this muscle becomes enlarged, tight or inflamed, it can press on the nerve.

The wallet in the back pocket can put pressure against the piriformis muscle in the buttock. If this muscle gets irritated it can send pain into the foot or feel like trickling water down the back of your leg. You could even notice driving your car is problematic due to leg pain.

I'm not saying don't carry your wallet. I'm okay if you want to leave it in your back pocket for a short trip. Otherwise carry it in a different pocket. Some patients plead they have the wallet moved to their side when they sit. That's fine too.

If you have to sit for an extended period of time, move it to your jacket, a shirt pocket or front pants pocket. Placing it on the office desk, your passenger seat or dashboard is a sure way to forget it or get it stolen.

Now you probably could also review the items you have in it. See if you can remove a few business cards, receipts, smaller bills, credit or shopping cards, etc. Use a phone App to enter some of your store card numbers or take a picture of them. They will typically scan well.

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Dr. Jay M. Lipoff is the owner of Back At Your Best Chiropractic & Physical Therapy, LLC, which is located in the Wildewood Shopping Center. Dr. Lipoff is also the author of ["Back At Your Best; Balancing the Demands of Life With the Needs of Your Body."](#) It is available in book and Kindle format at [Amazon](#).

He received his Bachelor of Science degree from Syracuse University in 1990, a Doctorate of Chiropractic (D.C.) from New York Chiropractic College (NYCC) in 1994 and he became a Certified Fitness Trainer (CFT) in 2005.

Dr. Lipoff is an Executive Board Member, International Chiropractic Association Council on Fitness and Sports Health Science; won the 2015 Arnold Schwarzenegger Legacy Award for his community work; has a radio segment: Back At Your Best in 5 Minutes or Less, President and Founder; Foundation 4 Heroes, Contributing writer, Huffington Post, Co-Founder, Drug Free Training USA; Member, NY Strength-promoting the importance of physical conditioning; Board Member of Public Relations Committee, Maryland Chiropractic Association; has spoken on nationally broadcasted radio interviews, has articles in print and referenced in over 150 print papers, magazine and on websites, President, Wildewood Business Network-promoting better business relations and community outreach.

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