

Sacroiliac Joint Injection Information

What is the sacroiliac joint and why is a sacroiliac joint injection helpful?

The sacroiliac joint, also known as the SI joint, is a large joint in the region of your lower back and buttocks. When it becomes painful, the SI joint can cause pain in its immediate region as well as the low back, buttock, hip, or leg. An SI joint injection delivers a combination of a local anesthetic and an anti-inflammatory medication (cortisone) directly into the joint. An SI joint injection serves several purposes. It helps confirm if the SI joint is the main source of your pain and can relieve pain and inflammation.

How Should I prepare for the injection?

Talk to your physician about medications and supplements you usually take. If you take blood thinners, ask for special instructions to stop them before the procedure.

What will happen to me during the procedure?

The skin over your lower back/buttock will be well cleansed. Next, the physician will numb a small area of skin and underlying tissue with an injection of local anesthetic, which stings for a few seconds. Next, the physician will use x-ray guidance (fluoroscopy) to direct a larger needle into the joint. He will then inject several drops of contrast dye to confirm that the medicine goes into the joint. Then, a small volume of local anesthetic plus anti-inflammatory medicine (cortisone) will then be injected. The procedure takes approximately 30 minutes. After the procedure, you may remain at the clinic for another 15-30 minutes.

What can I expect after the procedure?

You may notice a slight increase in your pain lasting for several days as the numbing medicine wears off before the cortisone is effective. Icing the area can be helpful in the first 2-3 days after the injection. You may take your regular medicines after the procedure, but try to limit your pain medicines the first 4-6 hours after the procedure so that the diagnostic information obtained from the procedure is accurate. You may be referred for physical or manual therapy over the next several weeks while the cortisone is working. You may return to your usual level of activity the day after the injection. If possible, it is best not to perform any unnecessary or strenuous work, sport or hobby for 2-3 days after the injection while the medication is starting to work.

The cortisone may take 2-3 days to begin working. If your pain is improved, you may restart your regular exercise/activities/physical therapy 2 days after the injection. Even if you feel significantly improved, gradually increase your activities over 1-2 weeks to avoid recurrence of your pain.

After the procedure, you will report your remaining pain (if any) and also record the relief you experience during the next two weeks on a "pain diary" we will provide. Mail the completed pain diary back as directed so that your treating physician can be informed of your results and plan future tests and/or treatment if needed.