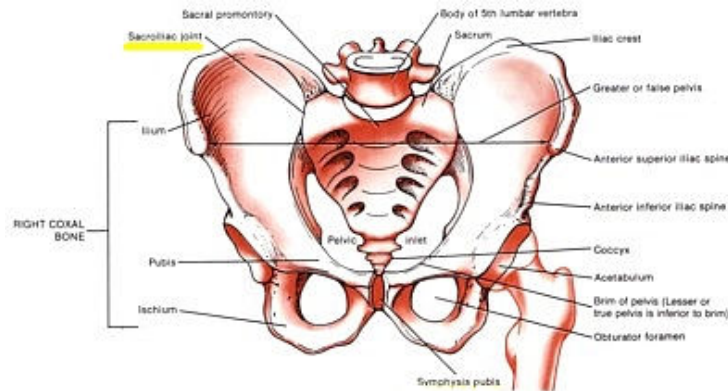


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Sacroiliac Joint Pain and Dysfunction



The Sacroiliac joint is the connection of the lower part of the spine (the sacrum) and the pelvis (at the ilium.) This joint connects the sacrum and the iliac crest to support the spine and hips. This joint is small and strong, and held together by tough fibrous ligaments. It is subjected to twisting and compression forces during normal activities. Pain in this joint may be the result of injury or inflammation.

What is Sacroiliac Joint Pain?

Sacroiliac pain is often described as pain that is localized in the lower portion of the back, buttocks and hip. In some cases it may refer down the legs or into the groin area. Some males may feel pain in the testicles as well.

Pain in the sacroiliac joint may be a result of a subluxation (partial dislocation) of the joint. The bones are slightly displaced, which stresses the ligaments that hold it together. It also puts pressure on the surrounding soft tissue structures.

Inflammation in the joint from trauma, chronic overuse, illness or infection may also cause Sacroiliac joint pain. This inflammation can be in the ligaments or surrounding tissue. This will cause swelling and put pressure on the nerves.

Pain is often felt in one side or the other, depending on which side is affected. It can affect both sides at once, although more commonly, it will affect one side first and then, due to compensation, the other side may become involved.

What causes Sacroiliac Joint Pain?

Sacroiliac Joint Pain may be the result of many injuries or disease processes. Arthritis, ankylosing spondylitis, postural problems, trauma to the hip, improper lifting, or chronic dynamic bending and twisting (such as those involved in sports activities,) are all possible causes of pain in this joint. Stress fractures from chronic overuse or dislocations from acute trauma, such as a car accident, may cause pain as well.

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Signs and Symptoms

Pain that is felt in the lower back, often radiating into the buttocks or back of the thigh, may be a sign of Sacroiliac joint involvement. The pain may increase during movement or weight bearing on the affected side. Sneezing, coughing, rolling over in bed and stooping may increase the pain. Pain may radiate to the groin area, sometimes resembling a groin strain or trauma to the testicles. A feeling that the leg, or hip, is rotated may also accompany this condition.

Inflammation in the joint will cause additional pain and dysfunction. Numbness and a cold feeling may also accompany this condition. Stiffness in the lower back may be experienced as well. In severe cases, weakness and functional limitations may result, due to the nerve involvement.

Physiotherapy Treatment

During the acute stage of injury:

- Rest and discontinuing aggravating activities
- Ice over the painful area
- Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medication

After the sub-acute phase:

- Thorough assessment of the lumbar-sacral area
- Mobilisation of the sacroiliac joint
- Deep tissue massage and myofascial release
- Muscle energy techniques
- Acupuncture
- Functional re-training of proximal/core stabilising muscles
- Superficial heat
- Sacroiliac joint belt

If the condition is not settling after 6 – 8 weeks:

Cortisone injection may be useful in chronic SI joint conditions to reduce inflammation and improve function. If used with pain relieving medication the injection may be used to confirm the diagnosis.

Differential Diagnosis:

- Lumbar spine involvement
- Piriformis syndrome
- Nerve entrapment syndrome
- Hip Pathology
- Gluteal muscle strain

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