



Sacroiliac joint injection

What is the sacroiliac joint?

The sacroiliac joint (SI) is the joint that is present between the sacrum (at the base of your lumbar spine) and the ileum (your "hip bones"). Pain stemming from this joint is very common and is often a source of pain for a number of patients. The pain is often described as anything from sharp and stabbing to dull and achy. Oftentimes there is associated pain in the buttocks, hips, lumbar spine, and often down the legs as well. Based on your signs, symptoms, imaging studies (if obtained), and your physical examination this injection will be offered to you. Sometimes the best way to determine if the SI joint is causing your pain is by putting medicine in this joint to see if relief is obtained. To that end, this block is a diagnostic and therapeutic block in that it lets the doctor know if the pain is coming from that joint, and if it is, a steroid can be placed in the joint for longer relief. This is done with the same injection on the same visit with the same needle. This injection is always done under fluoroscopy (x-ray) as blind injections are seldom in the correct area needed for true intraarticular injections of the SI joint (<15% with blind injections).

Preparing for the injection

Refer to the pre-procedural paperwork that was given out during your office visit prior to leaving. This packet will cover the important aspects of preparation for the injection. Sedation is seldom needed for this procedure as it usually takes less than 30 seconds per side once it is started and the area where the needle is advanced is numbed by the doctor beforehand.

What to expect

When you arrive at the ASC (surgery center) for your injection you will be "checked in" by the nurses at the center. You will be asked about your past medical history, medications you are taking, and vital signs will be taken. If you were on a blood thinner called Coumadin (warfin) a sample will be obtained in order to ensure that your levels are appropriate for the injection as this medication should have been stopped 5 days prior to the injection date. This portion takes time so it is important that you show up early for this to be completed.



You will then be taken back to the operating room where you will lay on your stomach for the procedure. The fluoroscopy unit (x-ray) will be positioned over you in order to identify the important anatomical landmarks for the procedure. When the correct position is identified your skin will be "numbed" with a very small needle and local anesthetic. This usual is very short lived. When the skin is anesthetized the doctor will advance a very small needle to the sacroiliac joint with the help of the x-ray for guidance. You may notice some discomfort as the needle traverses the deep muscles but again this is short lived. Once inside the joint a small amount of local anesthetic and steroid will be injected. You may feel a "pressure" sensation as the medication is injection. After this is completed the needle will be removed and you will be taken to the recovery room where you will wait for 15-30 minutes in order to monitor you. You will be asked how your pain is doing after the procedure. The local anesthetic will make the area feel good for several hours but eventually "wears off". The steroid that is injected usually takes 7-10 days for relief to be noticed but some patients notice relief sooner.

After your injection

Apply ice as needed to the area for the first 24-48 hours as this may help with some of the pain from the needle entry. You are welcome to resume PT immediately unless instructed not to do so by another provider. You will be given a sheet of paper discussing the procedure and the medications used. Most of the time you will be asked to be seen in the clinic within a few weeks to see the improvement you received with the injection.