

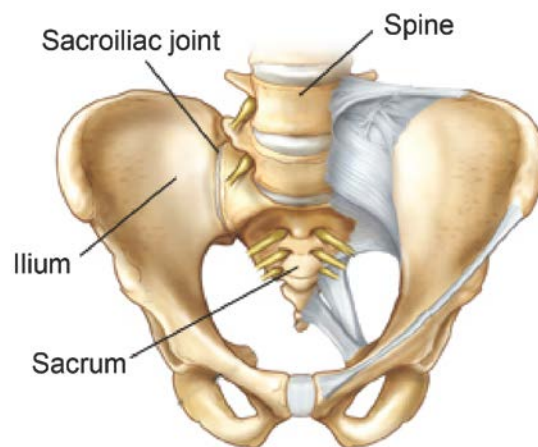
Sacroiliac Joint Injections

Benefits, risks, how to prepare, and what to expect

This handout explains sacroiliac joint injections to diagnose or treat pain.

What are the sacroiliac joints?

There are 2 *sacroiliac joints* near the base of your spine, 1 on each side of your *sacrum* (tailbone). These joints are where the sacrum meets the largest bone in the pelvis, the *ilium*. The joints are held together by strong tissue called *ligaments*.



A front view of the pelvis, showing the spine and the sacrum, and the ilium and sacroiliac joint on one side.

What is a sacroiliac joint injection?

In a sacroiliac joint injection, medicine is injected into a sacroiliac joint. This may be done to:

- **Diagnose the source of your pain.** Injecting a local *anesthetic* (numbing medicine) may tell your providers if your pain starts in your sacroiliac joint.
- **Help reduce your pain.** Injecting a *corticosteroid* (steroid) medicine in the joint may help reduce pain as part of your pain control plan.

What are the risks?

Having an injection into the sacroiliac joint may cause:

- Infection
- Bleeding
- Nerve damage
- Ongoing or increased pain

What can I expect?

- You will lie on your stomach on an exam table.
- The skin on your back will be cleaned with an antiseptic solution. Your skin then may be numbed with local anesthetic.
- Your doctor will use X-ray or ultrasound images to guide the needle to the right place. For some patients, we may also use computed tomography (CT) scans.
- When the needle is in place, you will receive the injection.
- After the injection, the needle is removed and a Band-aid will be placed on the injection site.
- Right after the sacroiliac joint injection, you may feel that your pain is gone or is a lot less than before. This short-term pain relief is due to the local anesthetic that was used in the injection. For most people, this pain relief lasts only for a few hours.
- If you received a steroid injection as a part of your pain control plan, it may be up to 1 week before you feel longer-term pain relief.
- The procedure itself takes about 5 to 15 minutes, but you will be in the clinic for at least 2 hours.

Does the injection hurt?

The injection involves inserting a needle through your skin and deep into your body tissues. There is some minor discomfort involved, but it should ease quickly.

This procedure is very short and most people handle it very well. But, if you are very nervous about it, talk with your provider about having *sedation* (medicine to help you relax).

How do I prepare?

1 Week Before

- You must stop taking most blood-thinning (*anticoagulant*) medicines at some point **in the week before your injection**. If you are taking any of the medicines listed below, talk with your prescribing doctor as soon as you schedule your injection to find out when to stop your blood-thinning medicine.

There are many prescription and non-prescription blood-thinning medicines. A few examples include Coumadin (warfarin), Eliquis (apixaban), Plavix (clopidogrel), aspirin, and anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs). Please talk with your pain doctor about all of your medicines to find out what to do before your injection to reduce your risk of bleeding.

- Please call the pain clinic if you have not been able to talk with your doctor about stopping your blood-thinning medicine 1 week before the injection. We may need to reschedule your injection for a later date.
- If you take low-dose aspirin or anti-inflammatory medicines, we will tell you if you need to stop these medicines before your sacroiliac joint injection.

Morning of the Injection

- Wear loose, comfortable clothing.
- Follow your doctor's instructions for reducing your pain medicine before your injection.
- You may eat and drink as usual, unless your doctor has given you other instructions.
- Plan to arrive at least 45 minutes before your appointment time.
- Plan to spend at least 2 hours at the clinic.

After Your Injection

- Even if you do not have sedation, we advise you not to drive or use machinery for 24 hours after your injection.
- We may send you home with instructions to keep a pain diary. Please follow the instructions closely.
- Be sure you have follow-up visits set up as needed with your pain provider, primary care provider, or both.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your pain clinic if you have questions or concerns.

Harborview Pain Clinic: 206.744.7065

UWMC-Roosevelt Center for Pain Relief: 206.598.4282 (Call any time of day, 7 days a week)