

Sacroiliac Joint Injections



What is a sacroiliac joint injection?

A sacroiliac joint injection is used to diagnose or treat lower back pain that comes from your sacroiliac joint. This joint is the place where your spine connects to your pelvis. For the procedure, your healthcare provider injects medicine directly into the joint to ease pain.

Why might I need a sacroiliac joint injection?

Your healthcare provider might do a sacroiliac joint injection to diagnose or treat pain that may be coming from your sacroiliac joint. This joint connects the bone at the base of your spine (sacrum) to the large pelvis bones (ilium). You have two sacroiliac joints, one on each side of the body. They connect the sacrum to each side of the pelvis. These joints act as shock absorbers. They transmit weight and forces between the upper body and the legs.



Some pain in the lower back, buttock, or hip may come from these sacroiliac joints. A sacroiliac joint injection is a good way to find out whether your pain is from a problem in the sacroiliac joint. The procedure can also help to treat pain from that area.

For this procedure, your healthcare provider injects numbing medicine (local anesthetic) into the joint. He or she may use X-rays (fluoroscopy) to show where to place the needle. He or she may also use a small amount of X-ray contrast dye. It can help make sure the needle is in the right place so that the medicine goes directly into the joint.

There are two types of sacroiliac joint injections. During a diagnostic injection, the healthcare provider injects only numbing medicine into the joint. If your pain eases, then your sacroiliac joint is likely the cause of your pain. A therapeutic injection uses numbing medicine and steroid medicine to treat pain that comes from the sacroiliac joint. It decreases inflammation in the joint.

What are the risks of a sacroiliac joint injection?

Sacroiliac joint injections are generally safe. Some possible risks of the procedure are:

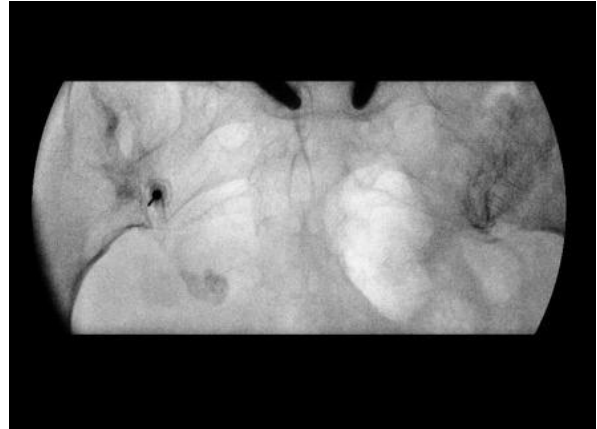
- Infection at the injection site
- Bleeding at the injection site
- Nerve damage
- Leg weakness
- Increased pain
- Allergic reaction to the medicines

If you get steroid medicine in your shot, you may have some side effects. These include temporary increases in blood sugar levels for 1 to 2 days, an allergic reaction, and flushing of your face.

What happens during a sacroiliac joint injection?

Your exact procedure may differ. But general steps for a sacroiliac joint injection are the following:

- You will lie face down on an X-ray table.
- The skin on your lower back and buttocks will be cleaned.
- The healthcare provider will use medicine to numb the skin around the injection area.
- The provider puts the needle tip into the sacroiliac joint. He will use X-rays to guide the needle. You may have pain in this area as the needle enters the joint.
- The provider injects the medicine into the joint. This medicine may include local anesthetic to block the pain. It may also include a steroid to reduce inflammation. You may feel a stinging or burning during the shot. This sensation usually lasts just a few seconds.
- The needle will be removed and a bandage applied.



What happens after a sacroiliac joint injection?

You may be sore from the injection. You may also have some slight weakness in your leg for a few hours after the shot. If your pain comes from the sacroiliac joint, you may feel pain relief in the hours after the procedure because of the numbing medicine. As it wears off, the pain may start to feel worse.

With a steroid medicine, it may take up to 7 days for the medicine to start reducing pain and inflammation in the joint. As a result, you may feel better for the first few hours after the shot. But you then have more pain for a few days before the steroid starts working.

You should call your healthcare provider if you have any of these symptoms:

- Severe pain
- Weakness or numbness in the leg that lasts more than a few hours
- Fever
- Signs of infection at the injection site. These include redness, swelling, and oozing.