

Sacroiliac Joint Injection

What is a sacroiliac joint injection?

The sacroiliac joints are large joints in the lower back which join the spine to the pelvis. These joints can become inflamed for a variety of reasons including osteoarthritis, rheumatologic disease, or metabolic factors.

A sacroiliac joint injection deposits medication into these joints to diagnose and treat pain which may be due to inflammation.

What can I expect during the procedure?

You will lie on your belly on either the fluoroscopy (x-ray) table or CT scanner. The area around the lower back and buttock will be cleansed with an antiseptic to decrease the chance of infection. The skin will usually be numbed with a local anesthetic. Next, using fluoroscopic (x-ray) or CT guidance, a thin needle will be passed through the skin and into the sacroiliac joint thought to be causing pain. The position of the needle may be checked using x-ray dye and then a steroid medication and local anesthetic will be injected slowly. The procedure takes about 30 minutes or longer if both joints are treated.

What medications are being injected?

Two medications are administered to provide both short- and long-term pain relief:

1. A **local anesthetic** (usually bupivacaine) lasts about 6 hours and provides the physician with diagnostic information regarding whether or not you have pain relief immediately following the procedure. After the local anesthetic wears off, your pain may return temporarily.
2. A **steroid** (usually methylprednisone) decreases inflammation that may be irritating the joint or bursa causing your pain. If the steroid is going to help, it will begin 24-48 hours after the injection and its effect may continue for several days, weeks, or months resulting in elimination or reduction of your pain.

Is the procedure painful?

We try our best to have you feel as little pain as possible during the procedure. During the injection, you may feel mild pressure or a swelling sensation in the area being treated. These sensations are normal.

How long does the procedure take?

Your appointment takes approximately 75 minutes from the time you arrive at the department until the time that the procedure is completed. Immediately after the

procedure, the radiologist may want you to stay for up to one hour in the radiology department for observation, but this is infrequent.

What are the risks of the procedure?

Complications that may occur during these procedures include: temporary increased pain after the procedure and occasional numbness.

On rare occasions, patients will have a bad reaction to the contrast dye used which contains iodine. Tell your doctor about any allergies you have.

Bleeding and infection are risks of any invasive procedure. Tell your doctor if you take any blood thinners.

What happens after the procedure?

After the procedure is completed, you will be asked to rate your pain relief. This helps determine if the injected structure is responsible for your pain and helps direct further therapy.

In some patients, the steroid used may cause difficulty sleeping and/or facial flushing for a few days.

You may resume normal activity as tolerated but should limit your activities to those which you could do prior to the procedure. Overexertion may lead to injury.

What about other medications I am taking?

You should talk to the doctor who prescribed any blood thinning medication before resuming it.

If you are diabetic, increases in your blood glucose may occur for several days and you should monitor this closely. Talk to the doctor who treats your diabetes before changing any of your medications.

You may continue taking your other pain medications after the procedure, if necessary.

How long does it take before I start feeling better?

Relief of your pain usually occurs shortly after the procedure (effect of the anesthetic), may be delayed for several hours, or may be gradual over the next two weeks (effect of the steroid). In rare cases, the pain may get slightly worse before it gets better. There may also be mild soreness at the procedure site for a day or two.

How often can this procedure be performed?

There are no strict rules about the frequency of injections. Your doctor and we will consider your case individually and determine if additional injections would be beneficial to further decrease inflammation and help your pain.

Where can I get additional information regarding this procedure?

Ask your doctor or contact **Orthopedic Imaging Center** at **210-617-9100**.

To schedule, please call our offices: 210-617-9000