

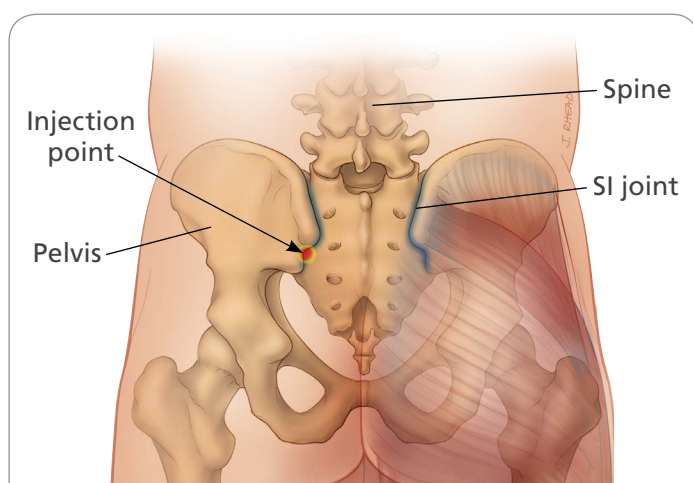
# Sacroiliac (SI) Joint Steroid Injection

## What is a sacroiliac joint steroid injection?

The **sacroiliac** [sak-roh-ILL-lee-ack], or **SI** [ess-EYE] joint is where the spine connects to the pelvis (a sturdy ring of bones that connects your legs to your upper body). A steroid injection (shot) is a way to deliver a concentrated steroid medicine and local anesthetic (numbing medicine) to reduce pain from an inflamed or arthritic SI joint. Steroids are powerful anti-inflammatory medicines that can reduce pain for weeks to months. The local anesthetic provides relief by reducing the pain of the injection.

## Why do I need it?

When the SI joint is arthritic or inflamed, it causes pain primarily in the buttock, which can radiate up to the low back or down into the leg. A steroid injection is a low-risk procedure that may reduce the pain.



A steroid is injected into the joint where the bones of the spine meet the pelvis.

## What happens during the procedure?

The procedure will be performed in a room with a movable X-ray called a fluoroscope [FLOOR-uh-skope].

- 1 You will be positioned comfortably on your stomach. The staff will confirm the proper place for the injection.
- 2 Your skin will be cleaned to reduce the risk of infection. A small amount of local anesthetic will be injected in your skin to reduce the discomfort of the needle.
- 3 The doctor will use the X-ray to steer the needle into the joint.
- 4 The doctor will use contrast dye that can be seen on the X-ray to confirm the placement of the needle (unless you are allergic to contrast dye). Then, a local anesthetic and the steroid will be injected. The injection is usually mildly-to-moderately uncomfortable. The discomfort only happens a few times and lasts a few seconds. The injection is usually performed without sedation (relaxation medicine).

## What should I do next?

Be sure to tell your doctor if you:

- **Have allergies** to any medication, especially lidocaine, steroids, or radiology contrast.
- **Take an anticoagulant (blood-thinning medicine)** such as warfarin, dabigatran, rivaroxaban, edoxaban, or apixaban.
- **Have an infection** or a fever.

## What happens after the procedure?

Immediately after the injection, you will be given time to recover. The local anesthetic may provide pain relief right away but can also cause numbness or weakness in your leg for a few hours. There can be a delay of a few days before you get pain relief in your back or leg. The relief often increases over 2 weeks. Most people will get relief, but not everyone, which is why your doctor will follow up with you 2 to 4 weeks after the injection. Your pain may increase for a few days after the injection. If this happens, an ice pack may help manage your pain.

If there is no improvement, your doctor may consider other treatments or injections.

## What are the side effects?

Steroids may cause facial redness, a feeling of warmth, or trouble sleeping for a few nights. They can also raise your blood sugar for a few days if you have diabetes.

## Possible benefits, risks, and alternatives

The table below lists the most common possible benefits, risks, and alternatives for SI joint injections. There may be other benefits or risks in your unique medical situation. Talk with your doctor to learn more about these benefits and risks. Be sure to ask any questions you may have.

Possible benefits	Risks and possible complications	Alternatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reduced pain</li><li>• Increased ability to move</li><li>• Faster recovery</li><li>• Less invasive than surgery</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rare complications include bleeding, infection, nerve damage</li><li>• More common complications include a temporary increase in pain</li></ul>	<p>Steroid injections are used to control severe or prolonged pain. It is often recommended to try other approaches, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Exercises</li><li>• Physical therapy</li><li>• Watching and waiting</li><li>• Medications</li><li>• Manipulation</li></ul>

## Should I stop my regular medicines before the injection?

In general, no. But please tell your doctor if you take any anticoagulants (sometimes called blood thinners), such as **warfarin** (Coumadin), **rivaroxaban** (Plavix), **dabigatran** (Pradaxa), **edoxaban** (Savayasa), or **apixaban** (Eliquis). **Do not stop taking your medicine without talking to your doctor first.**

### When should I call the doctor?

If you have **any** of the following symptoms after your injection, or if your symptoms worsen, **call your doctor**. If you are unable to reach your doctor, go to an emergency room to be checked.

- Increasing numbness, tingling, and weakness in your leg (especially if this happens more than 3 hours after the injection as the local anesthetic should be wearing off)
- Fever, chills, or sweats
- Severe headache
- Wetting or soiling yourself, or inability to urinate
- Difficulty walking
- Reduced coordination in your leg

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