

Patient Information - Sacro-iliac Joint Injections

What is a sacro-iliac joint injection?

The sacrum is the large bony part at the bottom of the spine. The hip bone is called the ilium and the area where it joins the sacrum at the back is known as the sacro-iliac joint.

Sacro-iliac joint injections may be used to diagnose and treat certain types of lower back pain. A mixture of local anaesthetic and steroid is used for the injection. This has the effect of reducing both the pain in the joint and the inflammation (tissue response to irritation).

Benefits

Some patients will experience good pain relief from the procedure.

Risks

Unfortunately no procedure is risk free. Short term side effects include pain and discomfort at the site of the injection, infection, bruising and bleeding. There is a possibility that you may have an allergic reaction to the drugs used. The local anaesthetic can spread and cause some numbness in the buttocks and legs. This is temporary and will resolve. Long term effects are uncommon.

Before the procedure

- You will have the treatment as a day case.
- You will be sent an appointment to attend the surgical day unit.
- You should arrange for someone to drive you home after your injection.
- Your stay may vary between two to four hours.
- Please bring a list of your current medications with you.
- You will be asked to undress and put on a theatre gown (you can keep your underwear on).
- Your doctor will discuss the procedure with you and ask you to sign a consent form. As the procedure involves the use of x-rays female patients will be asked for details of their last menstrual period. If there is any possibility that you may be pregnant please inform the doctor or nurse.

The procedure

- The procedure is carried out under x-ray screening. This allows the doctor to identify the specific level of joint to be treated.
- Once you are lying in the correct position the doctor will clean your back with an antiseptic solution which may feel cold.
- A local anaesthetic is injected in the skin at the site of the sacro-iliac joint injection. This may sting initially, before the skin goes numb.
- It is important that you keep still during the procedure as the needle will be carefully inserted under x-ray control into the correct position. You may feel a pushing sensation or some discomfort at this stage.
- Once the needle is in the correct position the doctor will inject the local anaesthetic/ steroid. A feeling of tightness may be felt; you should tell the doctor if you feel pain.
- A small dressing is placed over the site of the injection. This can be removed in the evening.

Following the procedure

- After the procedure you will be taken to an area to recover.
- The nursing staff will observe you before going home.
- Please be careful when you first get out of the trolley – ensure you are steady on your feet.
- Take your regular medication and pain killers as normal.

- There can be an initial exacerbation of discomfort before you start experiencing the pain relief. During this period, you may need to increase your pain killers or require stronger pain killers. Please see your GP if current pain medicines are inadequate.
- A letter will be sent to your GP and a further appointment at the pain clinic will be sent to you.

Please ensure that you have arranged for someone to drive you home after this procedure.

The information in this leaflet is not intended to replace your doctor's advice. If you require more information or have any questions, please speak to your doctor prior to the consent for the procedure.