

Sacroiliac Joint Dysfunction and Back Pain

What is sacroiliac joint dysfunction?

Sacroiliac (sa-krow-i-lee-ak) joint dysfunction is a type of low back pain. Pain is felt along the buttocks (*see Photo 1*) on one side or both sides, but not in the center. The pain can be felt (*see Photo 2*) up along the back muscles (*red arrow*), down along the back of the thigh (*green arrow*), or along the hip and groin (*yellow arrow*).

What causes sacroiliac joint dysfunction?

The most common causes are heavy lifting, falling onto your buttocks, and trauma such as car crashes. Recreational activities such as jogging and sports with repetitive motions may also cause pain. This condition is also common during and after pregnancy.

What are the symptoms of sacroiliac joint dysfunction?

- Pain feels sharp, aching, or uncomfortable
- Problems walking, limping, or taking shorter steps
- Problems with getting up from sitting
- Buttocks pain with or without pain down the leg after sitting for a long time



Photo 1. Area of the buttocks where pain is usually felt.

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Sacroiliac Joint Dysfunction and Back Pain *(continued)*



Photo 2. Areas where pain may travel.

How long does the pain usually last?

It varies from person to person. If the pain lasts for more than two weeks, you should talk to your doctor. They may want you to take medicine, do simple exercises at home, or send you to a specialist in joint manipulation and exercise programs.

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Photo 3. Piriformis stretch (right side). In this position, lean forward while pushing your right knee down.

Sacroiliac Joint Dysfunction and Back Pain *(continued)*

What exercises can I do to help with the pain?

An exercise program includes the stretches in *Photos 3 and 4*. The stretches should be held for 30 seconds and done several times each day.

Do I need any tests to help diagnose my problem?

Most people do not need tests for this problem, but your doctor or physical therapist might try some tests that apply force to your legs and pelvis to test for the source of pain. If you have pain down your leg or your foot feels weak while walking, your doctor might want you to get an x-ray or MRI.

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Photo 4. Hip flexor stretch (right side). In this position, keep your right foot pulled toward you. If you are unable to reach the foot with your hand, you can still stretch the muscle by lunging forward.