

# Having an injection in your lower back (sacroiliac joint) for pain management

Pain Management

Information for Patients

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## What is the sacroiliac (SI) joint?

- The sacroiliac (SI) joint sits at the bottom of the spine where it joins the pelvis.
- It helps you move and keeps your spine stable.
- Sometimes it can hurt due to wear and tear, swelling and injury

## What is a sacroiliac (SI) joint block injection?

It is an injection of local anaesthetic and steroid into the joint(s).

The injection is usually done with other treatments such as physiotherapy.

It helps diagnose and treat certain types of back pain

## What can happen after the injection?

1. No pain relief: The pain is probably not coming from the SI joint.
2. Short-term pain relief: The pain comes back after a few hours. The pain is probably coming from the joint, but the steroid did not help.
3. Long-term pain relief: The amount of pain is reduced after the injection but the pain may come back later that day. Then the pain gets better again over the next few days. This means that the injection did help. The steroid had a long lasting effect on the pain.

If the injection helps, it may be repeated in the future.

**Health information and support is available at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)  
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

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To give feedback about this information sheet, contact [InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)

## Are there other treatment choices?

- You and your doctor will decide on the best treatment.
- Your doctor will talk to you about other options. They will give you the latest information.
- If you are not sure about treatment, ask your doctor for more advice and information

## What are the risks of the procedure?

- Infection, bleeding, bruising and some discomfort at the injection site
- Drop in blood pressure: We will treat this with fluids given into vein by drip or medications if needed.
- Local anaesthetic toxicity: if local anaesthetic is accidentally injected into your blood vessel it can lead to fits (convulsions), drop in blood pressure, altered heart rhythm and difficulty in breathing. This is very rare.
- Nerve damage but this is usually short-term and rare.
- Failure: injection may not work. The injection is not a cure. It aims at easing your pain.
- Weakness or numbness: If local anaesthetic spreads to nearby nerves you may feel weak or numb for a few hours. If this happens you may have to stay in the hospital until this eases.
- You may have more pain for a few days after the injection.
- Diabetics may have short-term rise of blood sugars. Keep an eye on your blood sugar levels for 48 hours after the injection.

You must let us know if you

- are taking any blood thinning medications (warfarin, clopidogrel, apixaban, dabigatran, prasugrel, dipyridamol) when you are planned to have the injections in the clinic. This will affect how and when your procedure is done.
- think you are pregnant.
- have infection at the site.
- are diabetic.

**Please note:** No procedure is risk free. Although long-term side effects and complications including increase in pain are uncommon, we cannot rule these out.

Serious complications such as long term major nerve damage, paralysis or possible death are very, very rare with a probable risk of 1 to 2 in 100,000 or less.

## Important information before having the procedure

You must let us know before the procedure if you:

- are taking any blood-thinning medications (warfarin, clopidogrel, apixaban, dabigatran, prasugrel, dipyridamol). This will affect how and when your procedure is done.
- think you are **pregnant**
- have **infection** at the site
- are **diabetic**
- have **epilepsy or Parkinsons disease** (It is very important to keep on taking the medicines for these if you are on them)
- have a **pacemaker**

## What happens before the procedure?

- You will come to day case theatre and stay for 4 to 5 hours.
- Your doctor will explain about procedure again. You will sign an electronic consent form.
- Do not drive for 24 hours. A friend or family member should drive you home.
- You will stay in the recovery ward till you eat and drink and pee (pass urine).

## What happens during the injection?

- The procedure takes about 15 to 20 min in the theatre.
- We will check your blood pressure.
- You will go to the fluoroscopy (X-ray) room.
- You will lie on your front.
- We will clean your back with a cleaning liquid.
- We will numb the site with local anaesthetic injection. It is a tiny needle which numbs the area.
- X-ray will help us guide the needle to the right place.
- You will then get the injection of local anaesthetic with or without corticosteroid.

## How will I feel after the injection?

- You will wait in the recovery area for 30 to 40 minutes or till you pee (pass urine).
- Your lower back pain may be improved right away after the injection from the local anesthetic.
- It is important to keep track of how you feel for the rest of the day.

- Keep a diary of your pain.
- The steroid, when used, may take 5 to 7 days to work .
- You may have some tenderness for a couple of days after the injection. Use an ice pack 3 or 4 times a day to help this.
- Take your usual pain medicines after the injection.
- It is important that you keep track of the amount of pain relief you get as well as how long the pain relief lasted.
- We will book a follow up appointment.

## **Is there anything I should not do on the day of the procedure?**

You should not do strenuous activity for 24 hours after the procedure.

Do not drive for 24 hours.

Do not use heat on the injected areas for the rest of the day.

Do not have a bath, swim or use a jacuzzi for the rest of the day.

## **When should I get medical help urgently the after the injection?**

If you have

- severe back pain
  - new numbness or weakness of your legs
  - signs of infection (red, hot, tender, swollen, and oozing) in the area of the injection
- you should contact your GP or go directly to your nearest Emergency Department.

## **Important Information**

Contact your GP if you have any of the following:

- a fever greater than 38.5 degrees Celsius,
- shortness of breath,
- bowel or bladder problems,
- severe headaches,
- more pain lasting over a week,
- increased weakness or numbness or a sign of infection at the needle site (red, warm, tender, swollen, drainage).

If you cannot get hold of your GP right away then please **go to the nearest Emergency Department.**

## Follow up

A clinical nurse specialist will phone you about 6 months after your steroid injection.

If there is any more information you need, please ask your pain doctor or nurse.

If the injection works you may have it repeated in the future.

## Contact details

Pain administrative team: 0116 258 4471 or 0116 258 8253

Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm. There is an answerphone. We will call you back within 48 hours if you leave a message.

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔  
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Previous reference:

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