

# Sports Medicine: Sacroiliac (SI) Joint Dysfunction

The sacroiliac (SI) joint connects the hip and pelvis with the lower spine. SI joint dysfunction is a condition with pain experienced anywhere in the lower back, hips, buttocks and sometimes lower legs. This pain can copy other low back conditions and often makes it hard to do daily activity.

## Signs and symptoms

- aching or burning pain in the low back
- pain with standing, sitting up, sleeping, walking, bending, lifting and running
- muscle spasm around the painful area
- pain that spreads to the hips, buttocks, groin or thighs
- pain that gets worse going from sitting to standing

## Increased risk

- high-risk or contact sports (football, rugby, wrestling, hockey, diving, boxing)
- sports that require one-sided movements or loading (soccer, karate, golf, gymnastics)
- poor lifting techniques
- poor physical conditioning (strength and flexibility)

## Treatment

- Medicine can help with inflammation and pain.
  - Anti-inflammatory medicines, such as ibuprofen (Motrin® or Advil®) or naproxen (Aleve®) may be recommended. Take these as directed by your health care provider.
  - Other minor pain relievers, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol®).

- Cold and heat may be used.
  - Cold should be applied for 10 to 15 minutes every 2 to 3 hours for swelling and after any activity that makes symptoms worse. Use ice packs or an ice massage.
  - Heat may be used before performing stretching and strengthening activities prescribed by your health care provider or athletic trainer. Use a heat pack or warm soak. Apply for 10 to 15 minutes.
- Exercises to improve strength, flexibility and proper body mechanics are important. These can be done at home but often a referral to a physical therapist or athletic trainer may be recommended by your health care provider.
- Injection steroid injection may be helpful to decrease pain and inflammation in the joint.

## How to prevent

- Use proper lifting and posture techniques when lifting or sitting for long periods.
- Do correct warm-up and stretching before practice or competition.
- Maintain proper cardiovascular conditioning, core strength and lower extremity flexibility.

## When to call the health care provider

Call your health care provider or the **Sports Medicine team** at **614-355-6000** if:

- symptoms get worse after 2 weeks, even with treatment
- new, unexplained symptoms develop

To schedule an appointment with Sports Medicine, visit [NationwideChildrens.org/SportsMedicineScheduling](https://www.NationwideChildrens.org/SportsMedicineScheduling) or scan this code with your camera phone.

