

Sacroiliac Blocks

This handout answers some of the most common questions patients have about sacroiliac blocks. If you have other questions, please do not hesitate to call the Norman Prince Spine Institute at **401-444-3777** (Providence) or **401-845-1190** (Newport).

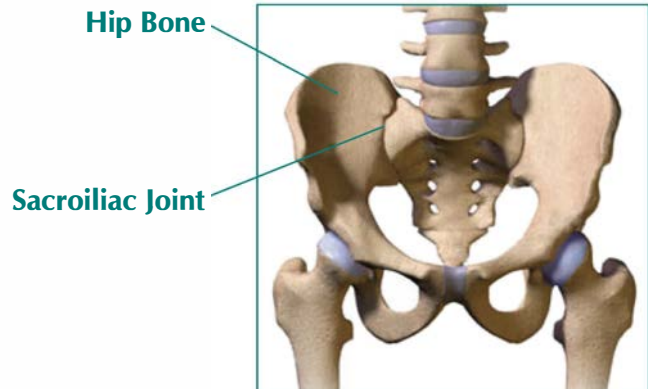
What is a sacroiliac (SI) block?

A sacroiliac (SI) block is a procedure used to treat pain in the lower back, buttocks and hips in patients with swelling in their sacroiliac joints. The sacroiliac joints connect your pelvis (hip bones) to the bottom of your spine. These joints move when you move. They also help provide support for your back and the lower part of your body. Sometimes, the joints become swollen from injury, arthritis or normal wear and tear. They can also swell if your legs are different lengths.

During an SI block, the SI joints are injected with 2 medications. The first is used to numb the joints. The second is a steroid that will help lower the swelling, which should reduce your pain.

Does the procedure hurt?

Before the procedure begins, your doctor will inject you with a medication called a local anesthetic. This will numb the skin over the area that will be treated. You may feel some stinging from the needle or the anesthetic. You may also feel some pressure when your doctor injects the medications into our joints.



Do I have to do anything to prepare for the procedure?

Once your procedure is scheduled, we will give you instructions on how to prepare. It is very important for your safety to tell us if you:

- Take a blood thinner (for example, warfarin/ Coumadin, Lovenox, or Plavix),
- Take any aspirin products or nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, such as ibuprofen (for example, Advil or Motrin) or naproxen (for example, Aleve),
- Have a condition that prevents your blood from clotting normally, or
- Have any allergies to latex, local anesthetics, X-ray dye, or seafood.

Please plan to have someone drive you home after your procedure. **If you do not, your procedure will be canceled.**



What happens during the procedure?

An SI block generally involves steps below:

1. Your vital signs (such as your blood pressure and pulse) will be measured. You will also be asked some general questions about your health.
2. You will lie on your stomach on the procedure table. Then the area to be injected will be cleaned and covered with a special sheet. This will help keep the area free of germs.
3. The doctor will numb the area with a local anesthetic. Then he or she will inject contrast (a substance that will help highlight the area on X-rays). If you are allergic to contrast, your doctor will discuss your options with you.
4. The doctor will use a special X-ray to help place the needle in the right spot. Then he or she will insert the numbing medication and the steroid medication in the joints.

The entire procedure takes about 10 minutes. You will be awake during the procedure and may ask questions at any time.

Are there any side effects from the procedure?

An SI block is generally considered a safe procedure. The most common side effect after an SI block is soreness where you were injected. The soreness will go away once the steroid starts to work. Also, your leg may feel numb (temporarily) from the local anesthetic, which may make it hard to walk for 3-4 hours. For this reason, we like to inject only one side at a time.



How will I feel after the procedure?

- You will feel relief from your pain right away because of the numbing medication. But this medication will wear off 5-6 hours after your procedure, and your pain will probably return.
- You will have longer pain relief once the steroid medication starts to work. This could take 2-10 days after the procedure. You should keep taking your regular pain medication if needed after the procedure.
- The pain relief from an SI block usually will last for several months, but this may differ from patient to patient.
- SI blocks work better in some people than in others. If you do not have any relief or if your pain gets worse, we will work with you to find the source of your pain and explore other treatment options. We may also repeat the SI block.

For more information, please call the Norman Prince Spine Institute at **401-444-3777** (Providence) or **401-845-1190** (Newport).