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## Sacroiliac Joint Injection

### Indication

Pain arising from the sacroiliac joint. This typically manifests as buttock pain, but can cause referred pain that can mimic other forms of back pain, hip pain and even sciatic-type pain. Injecting into and around the joint can provide diagnostic information to see whether or not your pain is coming from the sacroiliac joint. It can also provide a therapeutic (treatment) effect allowing some patients to get sustained relief for several months. If this doesn't happen, but the initial effect is very good, then other more advanced procedures can be considered which aim to block the nerve supply to the joint with a view to denervating it (removing the nerve supply) at a later date.

### Technique

The procedure involves lying on your front on a procedure table. An intravenous cannula may be sited in the back of your hand, and you will have monitors applied to check your heart rate, blood pressure and oxygen levels. The skin will be cleaned with sterilising agent and the site draped with sterile drapes. Local anaesthetic will be administered to the skin. An X-ray machine or ultrasound will be used to take pictures that will help your Consultant to guide the needle in to the correct position.

### Success

It is difficult to give an accurate figure for success from sacroiliac joint injections, as they are both a diagnostic and therapeutic procedure. This means that they are first used to confirm whether the pain is arising from the sacroiliac joints, and whether the pain is responsive to being blocked by the procedure. This figure depends on how confident your consultant is clinically that your pain is arising from the sacroiliac joints, and whether you have other conditions or factors that could mean your pain is less likely to respond to the injections. It is also not uncommon for sacroiliac joint pain to co-exist with other sources of pain. For pain that does originate in the sacroiliac joints only, the response is good, and 100% relief is not uncommon in the first few hours while the local anaesthetic is working.

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## Side Effects

As with any procedure, side-effects may occur. These are usually minor but may include:

- Mild local tenderness and/or bruising at the site of the injection; this usually settles over the first few days
- The local anaesthetic may rarely spread causing some numbness and/or weakness in your limbs and other areas. Should this occur, the effect is temporary and should rapidly resolve over minutes or hours.
- Worse pain can occur if the muscles and nerves are very sensitive and have been irritated by the injection. Try not to be inactive but to keep gently moving about and do some gentle stretching.
- Failure of procedure. Injection treatments are not always effective. There are a number of reasons for this, but sometimes they may not help your pain. As sacroiliac joint injections are a diagnostic tool as well as a treatment, a proportion of patients will necessarily experience a negative block.

## Complications

Complications from sacroiliac joint injections are rare. If they occur you should seek medical attention.

- Infection. If there is local warmth or redness over the site of injection with tenderness and/or you feel hot and unwell you should seek advice from your Consultant or GP. This may require antibiotic treatment
- Nerve damage. The sacroiliac joint is a long way from any major nerves in the back or leg and serious nerve injury resulting in weakness, paralysis or permanently worse pain would be extremely unlikely.

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