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SACROILIAC JOINT INJECTION

Patient education and discharge instructions

WHAT IS THE SACROILIAC JOINT?

The sacroiliac joint connects the base of the spine (the sacrum) to the pelvis. It carries a very large load and is held together by strong ligaments. The joint can become painful from arthritis, injury (such as a car accident or fall), pregnancy and childbirth, or lifting injuries. Sacroiliac joint pain is usually felt on one side of the low back and buttock and may travel into the back of the thigh and, occasionally, the calf.

WHAT IS A SACROILIAC JOINT INJECTION?

Using x-ray guidance, the physician places a thin needle into the lower part of the sacroiliac joint or into the ligaments over the joint. X-ray guidance is required to place the needle accurately. A small amount of contrast dye confirms the position, and then a local anesthetic (numbing medicine), often combined with a steroid, is injected. The injection serves two purposes: it helps confirm whether the joint is the source of your pain, and the steroid may provide longer-lasting relief.

DOES IT HURT?

The injection is usually brief and only mildly uncomfortable. The skin is numbed first. Sedation is rarely needed.

BEFORE YOUR PROCEDURE

- Read the handout **Preparing for Your Procedure**.
- Take your regular daily medications unless we have told you otherwise. Never stop a blood thinner unless we have told you to and the prescribing doctor has approved it.
- If you are having oral sedation, you must bring an adult driver with you.
- It is helpful to arrive with your usual pain present so that you can judge your relief accurately afterward.

AFTER THE INJECTION

- **Test your relief.** For the first several hours, do the activities that usually cause your pain and note how much relief you have. This information helps guide your treatment.
- **Driving:** do not drive for 12 hours after the injection. If you received sedation, do not drive, drink alcohol, or sign important documents for 24 hours.
- **Activity:** you may resume normal activity the next day. Be careful walking if your leg feels numb or weak.
- **Bandage:** remove the bandage the next day. You may shower; do not soak in a tub, pool, or hot tub for 24 hours.

- **Soreness:** apply ice wrapped in a thin towel for up to 20 minutes at a time during the first 24 hours. After 24 hours, you may use low to medium heat if it helps more.
- **Diet and medications:** resume your normal diet and regular medications. If you stopped a blood thinner, restart it the day after the procedure unless you were told otherwise.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Relief from the numbing medicine may last up to about 12 hours. If a steroid was used, it usually begins working within 2 to 7 days but can take up to 2 weeks. Temporary numbness of the leg can occur from the local anesthetic; let us know if it does not resolve within several hours.

POSSIBLE STEROID SIDE EFFECTS

These are common, temporary, and usually last several days to a week:

- Facial or chest flushing, a feeling of warmth, or feeling unusually energetic for a day or two
- Increased appetite, fluid retention, difficulty sleeping, or changes in your menstrual cycle
- **Higher blood sugar.** If you are diabetic, check your blood sugar 3 to 4 times a day for the first week and contact your primary care physician or endocrinologist if it stays high.
- **Higher blood pressure.** If you have high blood pressure, check it more often for the first week and contact your primary care physician if it stays elevated.

RISKS

Serious complications are rare. Risks include bleeding, infection, allergic reaction, and nerve injury.

WHEN TO CALL US

Call our office right away if you have:

- Redness, warmth, swelling, drainage, or increasing tenderness at the injection site
- A fever of 101°F or higher, or chills
- A severe headache that is worse when you sit or stand up and better when you lie down
- New or increasing numbness, tingling, or weakness in your arms or legs that does not go away within several hours
- Severe or rapidly worsening pain

Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room if you have:

- Weakness, paralysis, or inability to move your arms or legs
- Loss of control of your bladder or bowels
- Chest pain or difficulty breathing
- Signs of a severe allergic reaction, such as swelling of the face or throat, hives, or trouble breathing

Questions or Concerns

Call Coastal Spine & Pain at **(251) 291-2311**, Monday through Thursday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

For a medical emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room.