

SACROILIAC RADIOFREQUENCY ABLATION

For Chronic Low Back Pain

What is the purpose of this procedure?

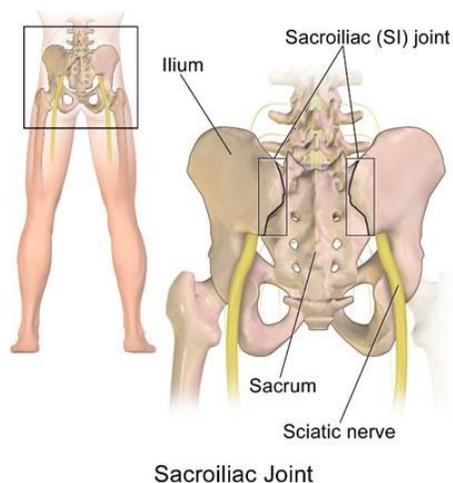
A radiofrequency ablation (RFA) of the sacroiliac joint (SI joint) is a procedure that uses radio waves to heat and destroy nerves.

These nerves carry pain signals from the injured sacroiliac joint to the brain. Radiofrequency ablation of the sacroiliac joint may be recommended for those patients who have received short term pain relief after injecting the SI joint with numbing medicine but have had unsuccessful results with later therapy.

What are the risks associated with this procedure?

The risks are infrequent. They include:

- Allergic reaction to medication
- Nerve damage
- Bleeding and bruising at the injection site
- Pain at the injection site or during the injection
- Infection
- Injection of medication into a blood vessel
- No improvement or worsening of your pain in some cases

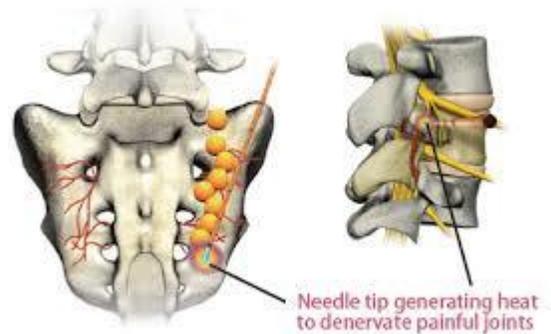


How should I prepare for the procedure?

- You must have a driver with you at the time of check in and check out. Your driver must accompany you to the clinic for your procedure.
- You may need to stop taking certain medications several days before the procedure. Please remind the doctor of all prescription and over-the-counter medications you take, including herbal and vitamin supplements. The doctor will tell you if and when you need to discontinue the medications.
- It is very important to tell the doctor if you have asthma or had an allergic reaction to the injected dye for a previous radiology exam (CT scan, angiogram, etc). An allergic reaction has symptoms such as hives, itchiness, difficulty breathing, or any treatment which required hospital stay.
- Tell the doctor if you develop a cold, fever, or flu symptoms before your scheduled appointment, or if you have started taking antibiotics for an infection.

What happens during the procedure?

1. When you get to the procedure room you will be positioned on your stomach.
2. Your back and buttock are cleansed with an antiseptic soap and the doctor injects numbing medicine into your skin, this will cause a burning sensation for a few seconds.
3. The doctor then carefully directs needles with help of the fluoroscope (x-ray) to the sacroiliac joint.
4. Once the needles are in place a low level of electrical stimulation will be applied to the needles. You may feel a buzzing, tingling, or mild pain in the area. You will be asked where you feel the sensation.
5. Once testing is completed at satisfactory levels, the doctor puts numbing medicine into the needles and the radiofrequency ablation will occur. The radiofrequency causes the tissue around the nerve to heat up. You may feel some mild pain or heat at each level during this process.



What should I do after the procedure?

- Your back and buttock will usually be very sore for the next week or so. Muscle spasms and irritation usually cause this pain while the nerves die back from the radiofrequency lesion. Pain relief usually isn't expected for 2- 6 weeks after the procedure.
- Do not drive for the rest of the day. You may resume your usual activities including work the next day.
- The nerves can grow back over a period of months eventually causing the pain to return. If this happens the procedure can usually be repeated.