

Sacroiliitis Treatment Guidelines

What is sacroiliitis?

Sacroiliitis is characterized by inflammation in one or both of the sacroiliac (SI) joints, located where the spine meets the pelvis. This inflammation can lead to lower back pain, which may radiate down the legs. Due to the intricate nature of the SI joint and its role in weight transfer, diagnosing and treating sacroiliitis can be complex.

Treatment approach

- **Conservative treatment:** Initial management typically involves conservative measures aimed at reducing pain and inflammation. This may include a combination of physical therapy, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), muscle relaxants, and modalities such as heat or ice therapy. Chiropractic manipulation and physical therapy are especially beneficial to those with altered gait mechanics and spinal misalignment.
- **Interventional methods:** For patients who do not respond adequately to conservative treatment, interventional procedures may be considered. These include corticosteroid injections, prolotherapy, radiofrequency ablation, and platelet-rich plasma (PRP) injections, which aim to reduce inflammation and alleviate pain.
- **Surgery:** In refractory cases where conservative and interventional treatments fail to provide significant relief, surgical options such as SI joint fusion may be considered. This procedure aims to stabilize the SI joint and reduce pain by fusing the sacrum and ilium.

Patient evaluation

- **Thorough history:** Obtaining a detailed history is essential for identifying pain patterns, exacerbating factors, and previous treatments. Patients should be asked about the onset, duration, and characteristics of their pain, as well as any associated symptoms.
- **Physical examination:** A thorough physical examination, including palpation of the SI joints, assessment of range of motion, and provocative tests such as the FABER (Flexion, Abduction, External Rotation) test, can help localize the source of pain and assess SI joint dysfunction.
- **Diagnostic testing:** While clinical evaluation is crucial, diagnostic tests such as X-rays, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), computed tomography (CT) scans, or bone scans may be used to confirm the diagnosis and rule out other potential causes of lower back pain.

Considerations

- **Conservative first:** Conservative treatments should be attempted as the initial approach, with a focus on improving function and quality of life while minimizing the risk of adverse effects associated with more invasive interventions.
- **Interventional strategies:** If conservative measures fail to provide adequate relief, interventional procedures may be considered to target specific pain generators and address underlying pathology.
- **Surgery as a last resort:** Surgical intervention should be reserved for patients with persistent, severe pain and significant functional impairment despite conservative and interventional treatments. Patients should be counseled on the risks and benefits of surgery, as well as alternative treatment options, before proceeding with surgery.

Reference

Lee, A., Gupta, M., Boyinepally, K., Stokey, P. J., & Ebraheim, N. A. (2022). Sacroiliitis: a review on anatomy, diagnosis, and treatment. *Advances in Orthopedics*, 2022, 1–8.
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