

Chiropractic treatments of the sacroiliac joint

Introduction to chiropractic treatments of the sacroiliac joint

For patients with low back pain that arises from the sacroiliac joint, a variety of chiropractic procedures can be applied. These mechanical adjustments are a relatively conservative form of care. Chiropractic care is often considered as the first line of treatment for sacroiliac joint dysfunction.

Low back pain arising from a sacroiliac joint is most frequently caused by a trauma (such as a slip or fall) or the process of childbirth. At times, no clear historical event can be determined, often making a chiropractic or other type of diagnosis difficult by history alone.

The goals of chiropractic treatment

The goal of chiropractic treatment for sacroiliac joint dysfunction is to utilize a method that is best tolerated by the patient with the goal of yielding the best outcome. Different patients respond better to different approaches, so chiropractors may adopt various chiropractic techniques to treat sacroiliac joint dysfunction.

Approach to chiropractic adjustment

Chiropractic manipulation of the sacroiliac joint is usually accomplished with the patient lying down on his or her side. More specifically, the knee opposite the side the patient is lying on is flexed and raised toward the patient's chest. The bottom shoulder is positioned forward producing a stretch in the low back and pelvic region.

When the slack is removed from the lumbar spine, and the pre-manipulation position is determined to be comfortable, a low force, high amplitude manipulation is applied by the chiropractor and usually results in an audible release (created by oxygen, nitrogen, and carbon dioxide escaping from the joint). This chiropractic maneuver creates the typical "crack" often associated with joint manipulation and sounds similar to "cracking the knuckles".

While this description of a chiropractic manipulation by a chiropractor may give an impression of something that is uncomfortable, the sensation is usually quite relieving almost immediately. Patients who have been treated with this approach in the past often request this chiropractic procedure.

Less forceful chiropractic manipulation techniques

At times, a less forceful chiropractic treatment approach for sacroiliac joint problems may be favored. There are several treatment approaches of this variety that can be utilized. These techniques include, but are not limited to:

- Stretching
- Gravity traction using adjusting blocks
- Respiratory assisted adjusting, long-axis leg traction techniques

- A "drop" approach utilizing a special type of treatment table
- A specialized adjusting tool or device called an Activator, as well as a technique called "flexion distraction"

The choice as to which chiropractic technique the chiropractor applies for sacroiliac joint pain and/or low back pain is case specific and often results from prior approaches that did not yield the desired result.

Additional chiropractic treatments

At times, when low back pain arising from the sacroiliac joint is not responding to treatments, an orthotic such as a sacroiliac belt or support can be helpful.

Examination and treatment of other associated chiropractic problems may be necessary to achieve long term results. For example, an anatomical short leg may be treated by the use of a shoe insert (heel lift, arch support/foot orthotics, or a combination of both) may be deemed necessary by the chiropractor.

Similarly, proper management of other spinal conditions that may co-exist may also be required to obtain a satisfying outcome for the chiropractic treatment.