**The Mystery of the Sacro-iliac Joint**

When people hear the words ‘low back’ what they often think about are the vertebrae and discs in-between that make up the spine. And consequently when people hear the words ‘low back pain’ most people have visions of herniated discs or vertebrae that have popped out of position. However when people come in and present with low back pain and I ask them to point to where it hurts, often they don’t point to the spine at all. They don’t point to a disc or vertebrae, they point to one (or both) of the sacro-iliac joints (SI joints).



As the name implies, the sacro-iliac joint is a joint between the sacrum (sacro) and ilium (iliac). But then this leaves the question, ‘what are the sacrum and ilium?’ While most of us are familiar with the vertebrae and discs in-between them, we’re not as familiar with what bones are present where the vertebrae end. At the end of the spine directly beneath the L5 vertebrae is the sacrum, a triangular shaped bone with the tip pointing towards the ground. Off to either side of the sacrum are the iliums, which are two of the six bones (in addition to two ischiums and two pubis bones) that make up the pelvic girdle.

So we know what the sacrum and ilium are, what does this have to do with low back pain? This brings us back to the sacro-iliac joint.

Like a joint in the spine, the sacro-iliac joint allows for motion and also transfers weight. While in the spine the weight is transferred vertically, in the sacro-iliac joints the weight is transferred horizontally from the sacrum to the iliums and then down to the legs. And while the vertebral joints allow for bending forwards, backwards, to the side and twisting, the sacro-iliac joints are really only designed to allow for bending forwards and backwards. There is some other motion allowed, but it’s negligible. Where we get into trouble with the sacro-iliac joints is when we twist and bend to the sides on them, with our feet fixed on the ground. If we add to this by reaching for an object and taking its weight this increases the chances of causing a problem. Like any joint if we try to make it do something that it wasn’t designed to do we increase the risk of hurting it.

Speaking with patients I’ve heard stories of people hurting these joints in multiple ways; from something repetitive while transferring weight (shoveling stone), to getting a filled crockpot out of the fridge, to something as simple as making a bed (which no one really wants to admit is what hurt them). The consistent action throughout all of these incidences was bending and twisting from the hips with the feet fixed on the ground.

We’re taught when we’re shoveling snow to face where we wish to throw the snow, which puts less stress on our joints. Well, this is good news regardless of what the activity is, whether it is making a bed or lifting a crockpot, we should align our body with the direction of activity as this will help us avoid injury. But if you’ve hurt one or both of your SI joints don’t worry, chiropractic is here to help.

**Feel Free To Forward This Information To A Friend!**
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This information is solely advisory, and should not be substituted for medical or chiropractic advice.  Any and all health care concerns, decisions, and actions must be done through the advice and counsel of a health care professional who is familiar with your updated medical history.