

## S.I.J or Sacroiliac Joint Problems

### Where is it?

The S.I.J or Sacroiliac Joint is one of two joints in the back of the pelvis that connects the sacrum or tailbone to the large pelvic bone, the ilium. These two joints, on either side of the pelvis, connect the spine to the pelvis.

This area, in and around the sacrum is the main nerve center of the body. This is where much of our low back pain, as well as hip and leg pain originate from.

### The function of SI Joint.

This joint is not designed for a large range of motion and it tends to stiffen and 'lock' as we age. It can also become hyper mobile or damaged due to trauma. The SI Joint has a gliding action as we flex and walk, and provides shock absorption for the spine. Sometimes walking, sitting, standing, or lying can cause pain in this joint and refer into the back, buttocks, and thigh. The function of the SI joint is to allow twisting movements when we move our legs.

### What affects it?

The hormonal changes of menstruation, pregnancy, and lactation can affect the integrity of the ligament support around the SIJ, which is why women often find the days leading up to their period are when the pain is at its worst. This stretching results in changes to the SI Joint, making them hyper mobile - extra or overly mobile. Also any injury or sudden impact such as landing on this area usually causes damage to the ligaments of this area.

### How does Pilates help the SI Joint?

- Pilates exercises focus on **stabilizing and strengthening the pelvic girdle muscles**. Helps prevent constant instability and alleviates stiffness in the SI Joint.
- **Core stabilization** begins with **pelvic floor strength**. This is at the base of the pelvis and these muscles are very important in keeping the pelvis secure and stable yet allowing control of movement.
- If the neck and shoulder muscles are also holding **tension** then it is difficult to use deep abdominal muscles or core strength. This upper body tension can also cause slight misalignment of the whole body. Therefore Pilates teaches how to use **proper breathing** technique to help relieve this tension and use all muscles properly to move safely.
- **Neutral spine** is the ideal alignment and placement of the pelvis and spine. Using Pilates exercises such as *Pelvic tilts* is important in establishing core stabilization and recognizing neutral spine.
- **Pelvic stabilization exercises** are important to help absorb forces from the weight of your head, trunk and upper extremities down, and forces from the lower extremities upward without compromising posture and prevent further pain or injury.
- Strengthening the *transverse abdominus* (deepest abdominal muscle) and pelvic floor muscles promoting better **posture of the spine and overall body**.

Making Pilates part of routine exercise gives the individual the confidence to move safely and help alleviate pain in order to keep performing everyday activities.

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