

Sacroiliac Joint Pain: Six Signs, One Conversation

The six signs that point at the sacroiliac joint rather than the rest of your lower back, what to try first, and the words that get it checked.

✓ **Verified against published guidance** from Cleveland Clinic, Mayo Clinic & Harvard Health · sources below

Cleveland Clinic says to see a provider for new or worsening low back pain, and for pain that does not get better on its own within a week. Harvard Health says to call about back pain and stiffness that worsens gradually over weeks or months, and about early morning stiffness that eases with a warm shower or light exercise. Mayo Clinic says a sacroiliac joint can rarely become infected, and the risk is higher in people who have diabetes.

✓ Do This

Time The Morning Stiffness

- Clock it when you get up
- Over an hour is the tell
- Clock it when you loosen

COACH'S TIP Cleveland Clinic names the one hour mark.

Walk Ten Easy Minutes

- Notice which way the pain goes
- Worse points somewhere else
- Better points at the joint

COACH'S TIP Harvard Health describes that reversal.

Point To Where It Sits

- Buttock, not the midline
- Sometimes groin or foot
- Can spread to hip or thigh

COACH'S TIP Mayo Clinic lists all four places.

Ask For Physical Therapy

- The most common treatment
- Takes pressure off it
- Strengthens muscles around the joint

COACH'S TIP Cleveland Clinic puts it first.

Write Down The Start Date

- A fall or a car accident
- A past spinal fusion
- A pregnancy

COACH'S TIP Mayo Clinic lists each as a cause.

Name The Joint At The Visit

- Say where the pain sits
- Say whether movement helps
- Say how long stiffness lasts

COACH'S TIP Cleveland Clinic exams back, hips and legs.

✗ Do Not

Do Not Rest It Better

- Too little exercise is a cause
- Activity is the treatment
- Tight muscles follow

COACH'S TIP Mayo Clinic lists it among causes.

Do Not Take NSAIDs For Weeks

- Over the counter is fine short term
- Then talk to your provider
- Ten days in a row is the limit

COACH'S TIP Cleveland Clinic sets that limit.

Do Not Assume It Is Arthritis

- Arthritis is the main cause
- Falls and pregnancy also do it
- But it is not the only one

COACH'S TIP Mayo Clinic lists both.

Do Not Self Diagnose It

- Low back pain has many causes
- Pain near the joint is not proof
- Exam plus imaging decides

COACH'S TIP Cleveland Clinic says a provider decides.

Do Not Wait Past A Week

- Pain that is not improving
- Both belong in an appointment
- Stiffness building over months

COACH'S TIP Cleveland Clinic and Harvard Health agree.

Do Not Jog Through It

- Running makes it worse
- So does sleeping on that side
- Stairs do too

COACH'S TIP Mayo Clinic names all three.

THE NUMBERS BEHIND THIS SHEET

Three figures worth knowing

1 in 4 of people with low back pain have sacroiliitis, per Cleveland Clinic

1 hour how long the morning stiffness usually lasts, per Cleveland Clinic

1 in 1,000 how many people ankylosing spondylitis affects, per Harvard Health