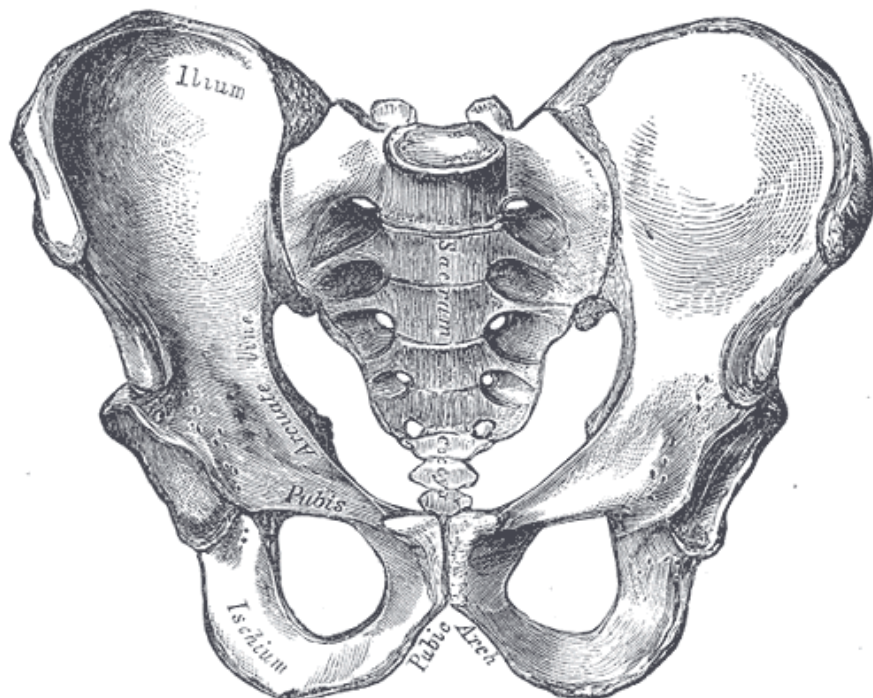


Sacroiliac Joint Dysfunction

Low back pain is one of the most common problems treated by physical therapists. Frequently, low back pain is caused by irritation or injury to the sacroiliac joint (SIJ), one of the larger joints in the body. As the name implies, the SIJ is located between the sacrum (lowest portion of the spine) and the ilium (pelvis bone). This area is at the heart of the body's core. Physical forces come from above and below and are transferred through the SIJs, making a variety of stresses placed on the joint. The joint is stabilized by ligaments and with injury to those ligaments; the joint can become less stable or hypermobile. The SI joint does not move a large amount in adults, but during pregnancy this can change. During the end of pregnancy, as delivery nears, the hormones that are produced cause the SI joint to relax. This relaxation of the ligaments allows the pelvis to move and sacroiliac dysfunction can occur. Alternatively, stiff SI joints may also cause pain. If the joint becomes fused or hypomobile due to disease or injury, pain can occur.



Sacroiliac joint dysfunction tends to cause pain over the buttock region and is usually one-sided. The pain may radiate into the groin area or down the upper thigh. Pain can occur with prolonged sitting, driving, standing, and walking. The SIJ pain tends to result in localized muscle spasms and tightness in the piriformis, gluteus maximus, and lumbar spine musculature.

The physical therapists at Lakeshore Physical Therapy diagnose the problem with a thorough history and physical examination. The evaluation will include special testing, alignment/ posture assessment, palpation, and functional movements.

Physical therapy treatment can be very useful for patients with SI joint pain. The treatment will depend on whether the joint is moving too much or not enough movement and will be tailored to each patient's specific needs. Treatment methods may include using joint mobilization, performing passive stretching, and mobilizing tight muscles. Stretches and strengthening exercises for the core, low back, and hips will also be a part of a program to target the pain surrounding the SI joint.

As with any injury, maintaining one's posture and alignment is very important. Maintaining good posture can significantly decrease the stress put through the SIJ and will help with prevention of further injuries.