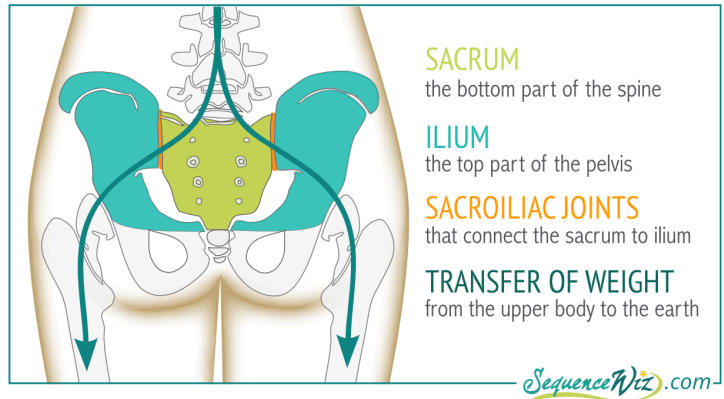


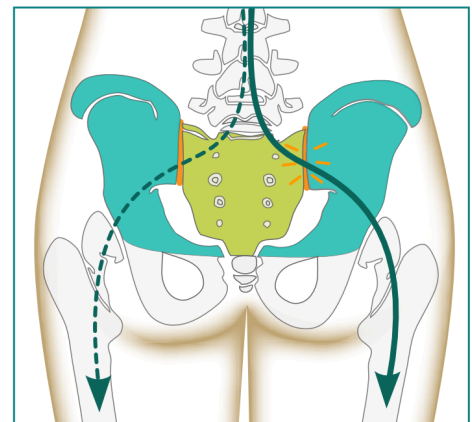
## A CLOSER LOOK AT SACROILIAC JOINT DYSFUNCTION

Your sacrum (the lower portion of your spine) fits nicely between the bones of your pelvis and is connected to it via the sacroiliac joints. The entire structure needs to be stable and symmetrical to properly transfer the weight of the structures above (head, ribcage, spine, organs, muscles, etc.) through the sacrum, into the pelvis and then into the earth, both at rest and in motion.



The sacroiliac (SI) ligaments that bind your sacrum to your pelvis and your spine are very strong, but the pliability of those ligaments is affected by hormonal changes. A hormone called *relaxin* makes SI ligaments more lax during pregnancy for the purpose of accommodating the birthing process. Relaxin also gets released during each menstrual cycle after ovulation to prepare the uterus for potential pregnancy. If pregnancy does not occur, the level of relaxin drops, only for the cycle to be repeated again the following month. The following populations are at higher risk for SI joint dysfunction:

1. Women of reproductive age. Women might experience more pain and instability in SI joints before their period as the level of relaxin continues to build. At this time, the joints are more prone to injury.
2. Pregnant women. In addition to the effects of relaxin, during the third trimester the woman's center of gravity shifts forward adding an additional pull on her SI ligaments, which can cause pain.
3. Postpartum women. After child birth there is no guarantee that SI ligaments will return to their former length, shape or symmetry. SI ligaments become further stressed if the mother carries her baby on one hip, hauls a heavy car seat around, sleeps in weird positions, and does other asymmetrical activities.
4. Older women. In women over 50 the surface of the SI joints can become rough and cause discomfort with asymmetrical activity.
5. Anybody who engages in asymmetrical activity on a regular basis (for work, sports or as a habit). Just like any other part of the body, SI ligaments adapt to the load we put on them. If that load is perpetually asymmetrical, it will have an impact on the symmetry of SI ligaments. When sacroiliac ligaments become uneven, they have trouble maintaining a proper relationship between the sacrum and the pelvis. As a result, the sacrum no longer distributes the weight of the upper body evenly through both sacroiliac joints, which creates strain on one side and causes sharp pain that can resonate into the lower back, buttock or thigh.
6. Anybody who had a bad fall or sports injury. SI joints can get injured in an awkward fall or while playing sports.



Sacroiliac joint dysfunction can affect both women and men, but women generally are at higher risk because of hormonal changes their bodies go through. SI joint dysfunction usually manifests as localized discomfort on one side of the lower spine that gets aggravated by prolonged sitting, standing, or bending forward. You might feel like one leg is longer than the other, or have a general feeling of instability or unevenness around your sacrum. Once your SI ligaments become destabilized, they become much more prone to irritation. It is necessary to stabilize the sacrum to keep the discomfort at bay.