

# Diagnostic Algorithm for SI Joint Pain

## Chief Complaints:

- Low back pain (below L5)
- Pelvis/buttock pain
- Hip/groin/thigh pain
- Sensation of lower extremity: pain, numbness, tingling, weakness
- Sitting problems
- Pain with position changes or transitional motions (*i.e.*, sit to stand, supine to sit)
- Poor sleep habits due to pain
- Feeling of leg giving way or buckling

## History:

- New onset or chronic low back pain +/- trauma
- Previous lumbar surgery
- Post-partum pain
- Description of pain
- Onset and duration of symptoms
- What makes it better/worse
- Treatment to-date: PT, medications, spine injections, other

Spine Exam

Hip Exam

**SI Joint Exam:** Point to pain while standing (Fortin finger test) / Tenderness over SI joint sulcus / Posterior SI joint tender to palpation/ Patient not sitting on affected side. Single leg stance test may induce pain on supporting side.

## SI Joint Provocative Tests



If pain inferior to L5, negative neurological exam, and minimum of 3 positive provocative tests the SI joint is likely a pain generator and image-guided, diagnostic SI joint injection(s) should be ordered.<sup>1</sup> Start with the *Distraction Test*, which has the highest single positive predictive value.<sup>2</sup>

## Diagnostic SI Joint Injection<sup>3</sup>

- Image-guided posterior & inferior approach
- 22-26 gauge stylet needle
- ~0.25ml contrast medium
- Up to 1.75ml local anesthetic



Needle in SI Joint

Continue Workup

Other Pain Generators Possible

NO

Significant Positive Clinical Response?

Note: consider repeating to rule out false results

YES

SI Joint is a Pain Generator

## Non-surgical Options

- Medication(s)
- Physical Therapy
- SI Joint Injections
- Radiofrequency Denervation

## Minimally Invasive SI joint fusion

iFuse Implant System®

1. Szadek KM, *et al.* Diagnostic Criteria for Sacroiliac Pain, a Systemic Review. *J Pain.* 2009;10(4):354-368.  
 2. Laslett M, *et al.* Diagnosis of sacroiliac joint pain: Validity of individual provocation tests and composites of tests. *Man Ther.* 2005;10(3):207-218.  
 3. Fluoroscopically-guided SI joint injection photos courtesy of Joseph Schifflini, MD.