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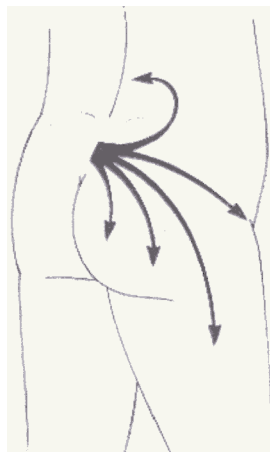
"treating the cause of your problem, not just the symptoms"

An Often Misdiagnosed Source of Back

There are many different potential causes of pain in your lower back. Two of the more common ones are the joints of the spine and a degenerated/herniated disk. Both of these can cause pinching or irritation of the spinal nerves, producing a referral of pain down the leg (sciatica). However, another very common one that is often misdiagnosed by some practitioners is problems with the "sacroiliac joints". These are actually the joints between the "sacrum" and "ileum" bones located at each side of the pelvis and not in the spine at all.

At one point in time, it was thought that this joint did not move at all and was not a source of pain. Studies have disproved this theory. The researchers in this study injected "freezing" or "anesthetic" specifically into this joint in people with low back pain. They used x-rays to be sure the needle was actually inside the "sacroiliac joint". Once the anesthetic was given time to take affect, the low back pain was significantly better and then returned when the anesthetic wore off. Although it was not a cure for their back problem, it clearly demonstrated that the sacroiliac joint should be added to the list of possible causes of acute and chronic low back pain.

Problems with the sacroiliac joint are one of the most common causes of acute low back pain that I see in my office. It can occur in the absence of any heavy lifting or accidents. When sore, you will feel the pain two to three inches to one side from the middle of the low back. It can even occur on both sides at the same time. Irritation of the nerves within and adjacent to these joints can cause pain to be referred to the hip, groin, and leg (see diagram). Since these same nerves are responsible for controlling many of the neighboring muscles, strong and painful spasms often accompanies the joint pain.



Research has also shown that the fastest way for any joint to heal, particularly in the low back and pelvis, is to restore the movement or mobility of the joint. All the joints in your body are designed to nourish themselves, remove swelling, and heal after injury. But, for this to occur, the joint has to be able to move properly. In most cases of neck, back, or sacroiliac joint pain, the individual motion within the joints becomes very “stiff or restricted”. In severe cases, the involved joints can become completely “jammed”. Of all health care practitioners, chiropractors have the most training and experience in addressing this problem. A series of “manipulations” or “adjustments” is the best form of treatment available to restore the full motion to the injured joints. When this is combined with a gradual increase in activity or exercise, the injured joint will be able to heal completely and naturally. If you would like more information on how doing adjustments helps the joint to heal, look at the “what does a chiropractor do?” section of our website (www.merrittchiro.com) or drop by the office to ask me personally.