

Sacroiliac Joint Rehabilitation

1. Knee-to-Chest Stretch

The knee-to-chest stretch is one of the more gentle SI joint pain stretches you can do; but do not think this means it is ineffective. This is a helpful pilates stretch for both the back and hips. For this stretch, you can do either single leg or double leg as shown below.

Single knee-to-chest stretch: Lie on your back with your legs extended. Exhale as you draw one knee to the chest and hold it for 5-10 seconds. Inhale as you lower the leg back to the mat and then repeat with the alternate leg. Continue this process until you have completed 8-10 repetitions per leg. Those with severe lower back pain may find it less painful to keep the unengaged leg in a bent position with the foot flat on the ground during this SI exercise.

Double knee-to-chest stretch: Lie on your back and draw both knees to your chest and hug them, relaxing the spine. Hold this position for 5-10 seconds and then slowly lower the legs. Repeat 8-10 repetitions per leg.

2. Knee Rotation

Knee rotations are another one of the SI joint pain stretches that is fairly gentle but effective. To begin, lay flat your back with the knees bent and both your feet flat on the floor. Keeping the lower back anchored on the floor and the lower spine relatively still, allow your knees to gently sway to the left, hold for a few seconds, and then return the knees to center. Now repeat this process on your right side. Continue this process until you have completed 8-10 repetitions for each leg.

3. Bridge

This exercise helps to build strength in your glutes and lower back, helping to support the SI joint. To perform this exercise, lie on your back with your knees bent and the arms against the body and palms against the floor. Squeeze the buttocks and raise the hips off the ground to bring the torso into a straight diagonal line. Hold this position for 5 seconds then slowly lower yourself back to the ground. Repeat 8-10 times.

4. Cobra

The yoga-inspired cobra pose, or bhujangasana, can be especially effective for overly mobile SI joints. For this SI pain exercise, start by lying on your stomach. Slide your hands beneath your shoulders and push up, extending your arms and bringing your upper body off the floor while keeping your pelvis and legs on the ground.

While doing this SI joint dysfunction stretch, you should focus on pulling your shoulders down and away from your ears as well as on relaxing your lower back and buttocks. Hold this position for 5-10 seconds, and then slowly lower back down to the floor. Repeat 3 times.

5. Triangle Pose

The triangle pose, also known as “trikonasana,” is another yoga pose that can help strengthen the SI joint, thus easing pain. For this position, begin with your feet in a wider-than-shoulder-width stance (around 3 feet apart). Point the toes of your right foot to the right and extend your arms out from the body so that they are parallel to the floor. Next, slowly bend so that your right hand touches the floor along the outside of your right foot and stretch your left arm up toward the sky. Turn your head and gaze up at your extended left arm. Remain in this pose for 5-10 seconds and then repeat the process on the opposite side. It is important to note that poses involving twists, such as triangle, should be introduced only after your joint has been stabilized and you are pain-free.

6. Child’s Pose Stretch

This is a common beginner’s pose in yoga. It will help you to stretch the hips and thighs and relax your muscles by focusing on your breathing. For this stretch, you will start on your hands and knees. Make sure your knees are spread apart and rest your buttocks on your heels. Extend your arms with your palms facing down reaching as far as you can. Hold this for a few seconds and repeat in between stretches as needed.

7. Bird Dog

This exercise will work your lower back and abdominal muscles to help gain stability of the lumbar spine. Begin by starting on all fours, making sure to keep your spine and neck in a neutral position by looking at the ground. Slowly extend your right leg behind you while simultaneously reaching your left arm forward. It is important to keep your shoulders and hips straight so your back doesn’t arch. Hold for 5 seconds. Repeat 6-10 repetitions per side. If you need to modify this exercise, you can just focus on extending your leg one at a time and not your arms.

8. Piriformis Stretch

Lie on your back with feet flat on floor, knees bent. Cross right leg over the left leg, so that the right outer ankle rests on your left knee (similar to how men cross their legs when sitting). With both hands grab your left thigh, hands on the back of the upper leg, and pull the leg up toward you. You will feel the stretch in your right buttocks. Hold for five seconds and let the leg down. Repeat 3-5 times for each leg.

9. 2nd Piriformis Stretch

Lie on your back with feet flat on the floor, knees bent. Raise right knee toward your left shoulder, using your arms to pull the knee into your chest across your body. You will feel the stretch in your buttocks. Do not do this stretch if you have pain in the groin or front of the leg when performing this. Hold for 5 seconds and repeat 3-5 times bilaterally.