A New Minimally Invasive Surgery for Sacroiliac Joint Syndrome

What Is Sacroiliac Joint Syndrome (SIJS)?
SIJS is a frequently overlooked condition that causes approximately 20% of all lower back pain. The sacroiliac joint is where the pelvis attaches to the lower back. Although the exact cause of SIJS is debated, many including Dr. Aust believe the sacroiliac joint is a shock-absorber of the lower back. Normally it glides 2-4 mm and rotates 2-4 degrees. In susceptible individuals, tight lumbar muscles caused by degenerative conditions of the lower back shift the joint out of place resulting in pain.

What Are The Symptoms of SIJS?
Although the symptoms can vary, a typical presentation is pain radiating from the affected hip into the groin and down the back of the leg. Sometimes the pain can go into the foot and occasionally the pain is in the groin alone. It is usually aggravated by sitting or arising from a sitting position. Sometimes the patient will feel a “clunk” in the hip or certain maneuvers.

How Does A Doctor Diagnose SIJS?
A history of recurrent episodes of pain in a classic distribution couples with lack of motion in the affected joint provides the first clue. A favorable response to chiropractice manipulation or physical therapy reduction techniques provides additional confirmation. And finally, temporary relief, no matter how brief, from a sacroiliac joint injection provides the strongest evidence that SIJS is the source of the patient’s pain.

Who Is A Candidate For Surgery?
As with most low back conditions, simple measures usually control SIJS. Many times the condition comes and goes without any intervention. In other cases, a patient obtains relief from intermittent physical therapy or chiropractic measures and/or an occasional sacroiliac joint injection. A patient should only consider surgery if the above measures fail to adequately control the pain.

Before Minimally Invasive Surgery, What Surgical Procedures Were Available?
Generally the joint was fused from the front or back through relatively large and painful incisions. Complications were frequent and nonunions common making these procedures unacceptable to many physicians and patients.

**What Is Minimally Invasive Surgery For SIJS?**
The surgery, developed by Dr. Aust, is a minimally invasive fusion using technology and techniques employed in the surgical treatment of the lumbar spine. A two inch incision is made over the sacroiliac joint.

A small piece of bone is removed from the iliac crest providing access to the joint.

The joint is cleared of soft tissue. A spacer filled with bone is inserted into the lower part of the joint locking it in position. The joint is then packed with additional chips of bone from the removed piece of iliac crest. Screws are inserted into the pedicle of S1 and the iliac crest. The screws are locked together with a rod, providing immediate and rigid fixation of the diseased joint. The surgery takes about 40 minutes and allows most patients to walk without crutches shortly following the procedure.

**How Long Does It Take To Recover From The Procedure?**
Most patients leave the hospital within 24 hours. No specific exercises are required. Patients are permitted light activities and most are comfortable at two weeks. Patients should refrain from vigorous activity for approximately twelve weeks. The fusion is generally solid at twelve to sixteen weeks.
How Much Pain Relief Should I Expect From The Procedure?
Early results in a small number of patients are encouraging. Dr. Aust is currently enrolling patients in a prospective study to more accurately quantify the benefits of the procedure.

How To Contact Dr. Aust
Dr. Aust is an Orthopaedic surgeon at The Orthopaedic Center in Huntsville, Alabama. Most of his practice is devoted to the surgical treatment of lower back disorders. You may obtain additional information about Dr. Aust at [www.visitTOC.com](http://www.visitTOC.com). To make an appointment, please call The Spine Center at 1-877-957-7463 (1-877-95-SPINE) or 256-327-7463 (256-32-SPINE).