

Video One: Eight Things Yogis Do to Stuff-Up their SI Joints.

Introduction

I'm Donna Farhi and this is the first course in a two-part video series on Keys to Maintaining Sacroiliac Stability.

In part one, video one, we will be looking at some common practices that can slowly erode pelvic stability.

Other topics include:

- Common damaging cues and transitions used worldwide
- More sound biomechanics of the pelvis, hips and spine
- Techniques to identify and alleviate SI Joint pain

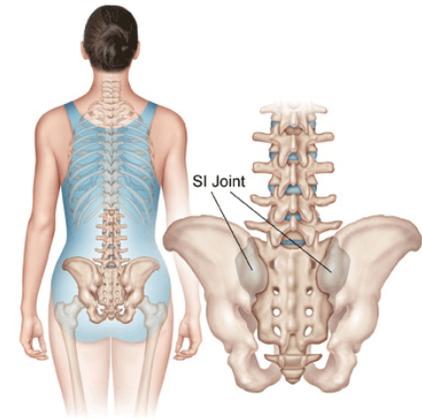
If you've come to this course as a yoga practitioner with SI Joint discomfort, intermittent or chronic pain it will be essential to identify and discontinue those practices that may be contributing to your SI Joint problems.

Note: It's important to watch this first video, because it's crucial that you understand how everyday practice habits could be contributing to your students' or your own SI Joint issues.

Video One Topics In Depth:

1. Poor Posture and Biomechanics

Standing and moving with poor posture causes force to move into the lower back and sacroiliac joints rather than through these structures into the legs and feet.



Example: Tadasana

- Posteriorly tilted pelvis with forward thrust of pelvis, kyphotic thoracic spine and forward head.
- Neutral pelvic position with hyperextended shoulder and overarch of the upper lumbar.
- Asymmetrical pelvic shifts: I'm cool, what about you?
- Lifting with the pelvis and lumbar in flexion.

Solution: Postural repatterning, gravity-tested standing posture.

2. Femoral Leveraging

We each have a unique pelvic and femoral structure that contributes to our capacity to flex, extend, abduct and adduct our hips. When these anatomical variations are not respected, the femurs can become powerful levers to pry apart the sacroiliac joints.

Examples:

- Pushing the knees to the floor in **Baddha Konasana** without adequate pelvic stabilization
- **Supta Padangusthasana:** external rotation movements practiced passively
- Engaging strategies, such as the use of weights or external pressure from a teacher, that force the femur beyond its healthy range of motion.

Solution: Stabilize the pelvis through core strengthening to contain the movement between the ilium and sacrum and learn to differentiate the healthy range of movement between the acetabulum and the femur.

3. Spinal Leveraging

The spine together with the weight of the torso and head can act as a substantial lever on the SI Joints. Practicing movements where both the pelvis and spine are in multiple planes, and the spine is cantilevered in space off of an unstable pelvis is a recipe for radical sheering of the SI Joints and the lumbar spine.

Examples:

- **Triangle Pose** practiced with the spine “hanging” off the pelvis.

Solution:

- A. First work with postures such as **Virabhadrasana II (Warrior Pose Two)** and **Parsvakonasana (Side Angle Pose)**. Emphasize pushing back from the front leg to the back leg to stabilize the pelvis, and anchor the spine *towards* the sacrum.
- B. In **Trikonasana** (Triangle Pose), experiment with practicing with the front externally rotated leg toward a wall, and the overhead arm pressing into the wall to encourage “plugging” the spine and sacrum back into the pelvis.

Note: Consider that these wide-stance movements with one leg rotated out, and one leg rotated inwards, do not appear to have every-day usefulness. Consider relinquishing these postures altogether until your SI Joints feel snug again.

4. Practicing Standing Postures with a One Size Fits All Template

Because of our unique pelvic template, the stance for standing postures needs to be modified to reflect the set of the hips. Working with a one-size-fits-all template can create torques and shear stress into the hip joints and SI Joints that can gradually erode the hip joints and create pelvic instability.

Example: Practicing with the front heel to the back arch regardless of pelvic width or structural variation.

Solution: Experiment with preparatory stances to find the optimal relationship between the front and back leg.

5. Practicing Standing Postures with Hips “Square to the Front”

Forcing the pelvis into a “square to the front” position in standing postures contributes to knee injuries, hip degradation, and SI Joint instability and injury.

Example: **Trikonasana, Virabhadrasana II** practiced with the hips square to the front.

Solution: Experiment to find the optimal position for your individual structure that allows the front knee to track over the ankle, the front heel to track to the center of the acetabulum/femur, and the sacroiliac joint to remain snug.

6. Wonky Transitions from Lunges to Standing Postures and Vice-Versa

- A. Moving flow practices where standing postures are inserted within the Sun Salutation have become a popular practice that involves repeated transitions in and out of asymmetrical postures.

- B. Transitioning from a deep lunge position into standing postures by rotating the knee inwards and the thrusting the femoral head backwards (and vice-versa, transitioning from standing postures back to lunges incorrectly) contributes to knee, hip and pelvic instability.
- C. The previous no-no's are further compounded by repetition in unsupported asymmetrical wide-stance postures.

Solution: Learn to stabilize the position of the femur through engaging hip, gluteal and core muscles during all flow transitions. Or, simplify these practices by doing sagittal plane movements such as **Suryanamaskar** and multiple plane movements such as standing postures as separate practices (i.e. alternate **Suryanamaskar** with standing postures).

7. The Pelvis and Lumbar Spine Moving in Opposition in Wide-Stance Postures and Twists

Practicing wide-stance postures where the pelvis is rotated in opposition to the movement of the lumbar spine creates a deep architectural rift between these two structures. Twisting with the pelvis rigidly fixed, forces the lumbar vertebrae beyond their rotational capacity and creates a “corkscrew” effect between the sacrum and ilium.

Examples:

- A. **Virabhadrasana I** practiced in a wide-stance (Iyengar method)
- B. Any seated twist with the pelvis rigidly fixed
- C. Supine twists where core muscles are disengaged combined with a fixed pelvic position and strong leverage from the femurs.

Solution: Narrow stance methods that bring the pelvis and the lower back into the same plane of movement. (A.G. Mohan). Modifying twists to allow for some “give” in the pelvis to reduce rotational stress in the SI Joints.

8. All Flexibility and No Strength

Emphasizing the attainment of flexibility, especially in non-weight bearing, passive positions, contributes to destabilization of the three pelvic bones. This destabilization can be compounded with the addition of external force in the form of sandbags, yoga ropes, forceful adjustments from a teacher, and long stays in passive movements that overstretch ligaments.

Example: Supta Padangusthasana (standing and on the floor)

Solutions:

- A. Incorporate regular symmetrical strength movements that close the bones of the pelvis, reinforce regional muscular support to the SIJ, and regulate hip movement.
- B. Consider alternating practice days that work with mobility with practice days that work with stability.
- C. Add movement practices such as walking up hills and swimming with a pull buoy between the upper thighs to tone core muscles as well as build cardiovascular health. Kill two birds with one stone!

Summary

- Write down any practices that I've shown that you think are contributing to your SI Joint issues.
- Identify three that you can immediately modify.
- I encourage you to consolidate your understanding in your personal practice or with the help of your teacher.
- If you currently have debilitating SI Joint discomfort, you may need to avoid group classes where you may not feel free to modify the practice to your needs.