

# Physio Tip 1. *from Simon Yelland* Physiotherapist (MHC Division 3 Men)

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## LOW BACK and LEG PAIN

Hockey is not kind to the back. Whether it is running at speed bent over controlling the ball or deep bending or lunging with rotation movements are all movements that can irritate pre existing back pain or cause back/leg pain. The deep muscles of the back, work to maintain the upright posture, but have to work harder to sustain the bent over posture. The intervertebral discs carry extra load in this position as well as the facet joints, that control the twisting movements. The ligaments that that overlay the vertebrae are placed under load as well in keeping the vertebrae together.

Due to the fast take off, stopping and twisting motions, the sacroiliac and pubic symphysis can also become irritated, stiff and painful. Because we pivot mainly on the left leg to hit the ball, the left sacroiliac joint can become very stiff and refer pain in to the buttock or leg.

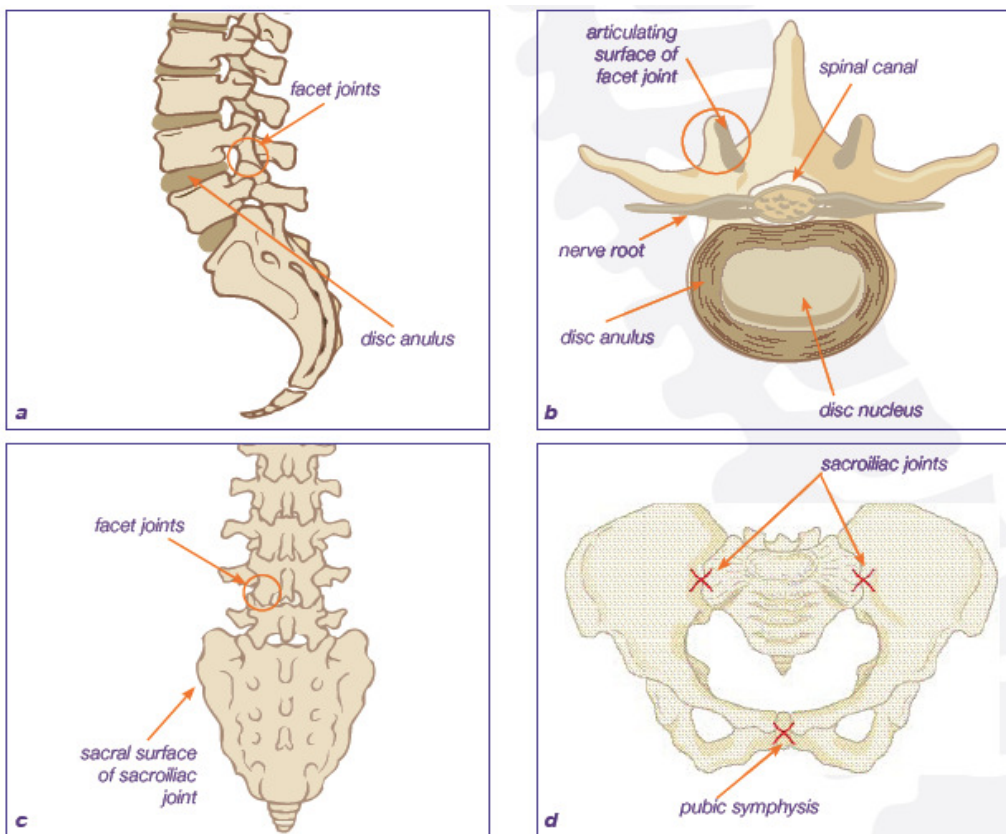


Figure 1a, 1b, 1c & 1d: Key structures of the lumbar spine

*It is essential therefore to maintain a flexible spine and hip joints and to do exercises that “De-Load” the spine.*

*This means to take the load off the intervertebral discs and facet joints. This is done with strengthening the back extensor muscle groups as well as the “Core” muscle groups in the Abdomen, Transverse Abdominus and the Internal and External Obliques.*

*Warm-up, Cool-Down and intra game stretches should be carried out to maintain spinal flexibility and to help prevent back pain.*

Core stability and back extensor strengthening exercises can be done throughout the week between games to help develop better control of the spine. Stretches should be done before and after training and 30 minutes before your weekend game, after you have warmed up with a 5 minute run. Never run on to the field without having warmed up and stretched.

I have included a few exercises to help maintain mobility and flexibility of the spine. If you have any further questions or you need an assessment my contact details are [hintphysio@bigpond.com](mailto:hintphysio@bigpond.com) or 55964866.