

Coccyx Pain

Service User Information Sheet

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Introduction

The aim of this leaflet is to provide some basic information on your condition and some self help advice.

Anatomy

The coccyx is otherwise known as the tailbone and sits at the very bottom of the spine. It is made up of a few bones that have become fused together. It is attached to the bottom of the sacrum bone and sits within the pelvis. The pelvic floor muscles attach to the coccyx (Figure 1).

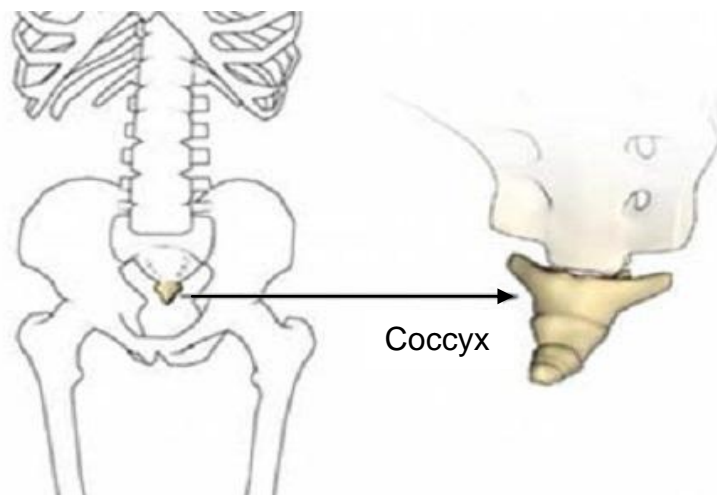


Figure 1: Coccyx Bone

Injury

The coccyx can become injured or painful from:

- A fall, landing on your bottom e.g. slip on ice, fall from horse, missing a chair when sitting down
- Childbirth
- Repetitive strain
- Surgery

A painful coccyx is known as coccydynia.

Symptoms of Coccydynia:

- Pain during or after sitting
- Acute pain when getting up from sitting
- Deep ache around the coccyx (between the buttocks)
- Tenderness on pressing the tip of the coccyx
- Shooting pains
- Like sitting on a marble
- Pain during sexual intercourse
- Pain during a bowel movement or when the bowel is full

Treatment

Treatment is often not started quickly as patients wait for the pain to disappear by itself, or onward referral may be delayed in the hope it will settle by itself. Treatment can be prolonged and the pain can take a long time to settle down.

Some simple remedies can help. Try ice, heat, and anti-inflammatory medications.

Other possible treatments may include injection of anti-inflammatory and steroid, manual treatment and surgery to remove the coccyx.

Physiotherapy

Specially trained physiotherapists can assess and treat coccyx pain. Once any other causes for the pain have been excluded such as lower back problems, then the physiotherapist can use exercise, manual therapy, and taping to treat the local problem. Manual therapy can include mobilising the coccyx, either externally or sometimes internally via the back passage. This usually provides good relief from the symptoms. The physiotherapist can also assess the muscles and soft tissue next to the coccyx and treat these if they are the cause of the pain.

Sitting

One of the most important things you can do to help your pain is to change the way you sit, or avoid it all together where possible. Try not to sit on 'one cheek' as this places strain on the rest of your body.

Sitting places a great strain on the coccyx (see Figure 2)

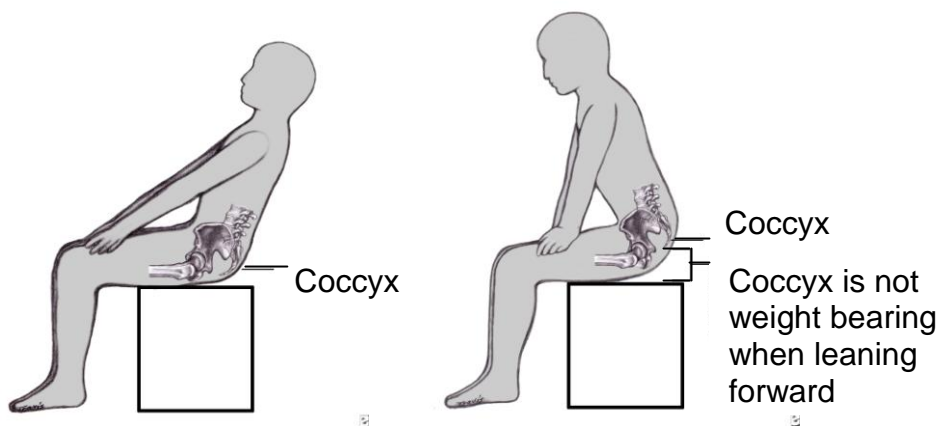


Figure 2: Sitting Positions to Reduce Stress on Coccyx Area

By sitting, leaning forward on your thighs, the pressure on your coccyx will be reduced.

It is also recommended that you use two towels, rolled up and placed in a 'V' shape with the point at the front of the seat to sit on. Place your 'seat bones' on the towels and this should ensure your coccyx remains free of pressure at the back in the opening of the V. Check you can get your hand under your bottom at the back! Use these towels at home, work, socially, in the car or wherever you need to sit down.

Reference

www.coccyx.org

Diagrams: Figure 2: www.emedicine.medscape.com