

## Coccyx pain following childbirth

This leaflet is designed to help you if you are experiencing coccyx (base of spine) pain following the birth of your baby.

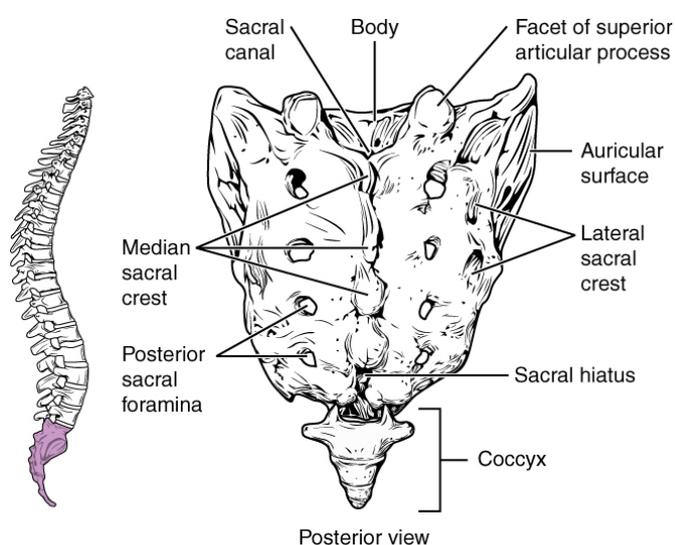
### What is the coccyx and why do I have pain?

The coccyx is a small triangular bone at the base of your spine that consists of 3-5 vertebrae.

The coccyx is attached to the sacrum/base of the spine by various ligaments and the levator ani muscle (part of your pelvic floor muscles). Coccyx pain or 'coccydynia' is a rare condition that affects women five times more than men.

During childbirth, the ligaments around the coccyx are strained from pushing. This can lead to pain in the coccyx area making it difficult to sit down comfortably. Most women find standing up from sitting uncomfortable and find that moving around helps.

It can take 6-12 weeks for the coccyx to heal and the pain to resolve.



### What makes the coccyx pain worse?

- Prolonged sitting, especially on a hard surface.
- Bending.
- Lifting.
- Climbing stairs.
- Opening bowels.
- Some women can feel increased pain during menstruation and sometimes with intercourse.

Other causes for coccyx pain include:

- Trauma/fall onto buttocks and coccyx.
- Repetitive micro trauma, for example from inadequate sitting posture or sports such as cycling and motor sports.

## How can I manage my pain?

Most cases improve with conservative management, which includes:

- Using non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications (NSAIDS) – visit your GP for advice.
- Using specific coccyx cushions (U shaped) or gel cushions to relieve pressure on the coccyx. Try to use this cushion every time you sit down.
- Avoid sitting for prolonged periods.
- Postural correction – adequate sitting and standing posture can help to alleviate pressure on the coccyx. Ensure you sit on an appropriate cushion with your back supported. Your weight should be on your sitting bones underneath your buttocks. Do not sit slumped. When standing, try to tilt your pelvis into neutral alignment (tuck your coccyx/bottom in). Do not let your bottom/back arch backwards.
- Try to sleep on your side with pillows for support if needed.
- Adjust how you get in and out of bed – try to roll onto your side and push yourself up, rather than sitting up directly onto the coccyx.
- Using ice – wrap ice pack/frozen peas in a tea towel and place on the painful area for 10-20 minutes. Can be used up to three times a day if required.
- Stool softening medication if pain is aggravated by bowel movements – visit your GP for advice.
- Physiotherapy and exercises.

## Physiotherapy for coccyx pain

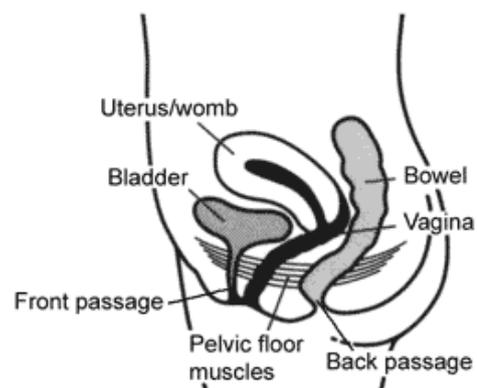
A physiotherapy assessment can help to determine the triggers of coccydynia. The physiotherapist can then advise on postural correction and teach you exercises to help strengthen the muscles supporting your coccyx and lower back/pelvis.

## Exercises

### Pelvic floor exercises:

Due to the attachments of your pelvic floor to the coccyx, pelvic floor exercises can help to relieve coccyx pain.

Try to find a position that does not aggravate your pain – for example, lying on your tummy, side lying or sitting on an adequate cushion. You can do your pelvic floor exercises lying on your back with your knees bent, as long as there is no discomfort.



### Exercise 1 'Slow ones' (these also help with urge incontinence and urgency)

- You should begin exercising your pelvic floor lying on your back with knees bent and feet flat on the bed.
- Tighten the back passage as if trying to hold in wind and then bring this contraction forward as if trying to stop urine.

- Do not use your tummy or bottom muscles when doing this exercise. You should not see any external movement.
- Aim to hold this contraction for 3-5 seconds. Build up strength within your pelvic floor until you can hold for 10 seconds.
- Keep breathing throughout and then relax your pelvic floor for at least 6 seconds in between each contraction.

### **Exercise 2 'Quick ones' (these can also help with stress incontinence)**

- You should begin exercising your pelvic floor lying on your back with knees bent and feet flat on the bed.
- Tighten the back passage as if trying to hold in wind and then bring this contraction forward as if trying to stop urine.
- Do not use your tummy or bottom muscles when doing this exercise. You should not see any external movement.
- Hold for 1 second and relax for 1 second. Repeat 10 times.

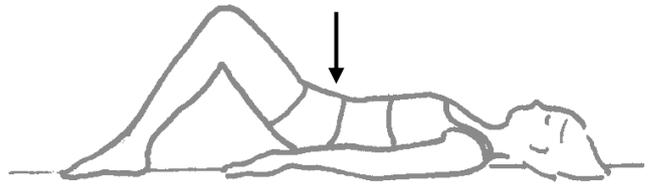
\*\* Repeat each exercise (slow and fast) 10 times, 3-4 times a day.

### **Buttocks squeezes:**

Lying or sitting, squeeze your buttocks together, hold for 10 seconds and relax. Repeat 10 times.

### **Transversus abdominis:**

- Start lying down with knees bent and feet resting on the bed.
- Take a breath in, and then as you breathe out gently draw your lower abdomen in towards your spine.
- Try to hold this, while continuing to breathe, and then relax.
- Try to increase the hold until you can hold for the count of 10 and repeat 10 times;
- Always draw these muscles in to support you when you are doing any abdominal exercises and in any activity involving your back e.g. lifting anything, including your baby; rising from sitting; getting out of bed; and bending over. This is another good habit for life.

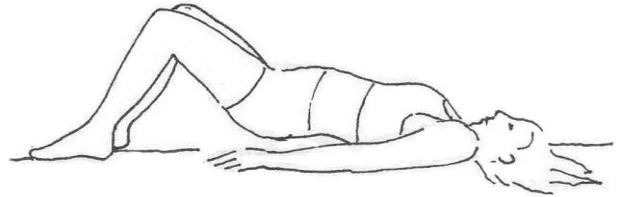


### **Exercise 2 (Pelvic tilting)**

- Start lying down with knees bent and feet resting on the bed, draw in your lower abdomen, as in exercise 1.
- At the same time tuck your tailbone under, flattening the curve of your lower back.
- Keep breathing while holding this position for a few moments and then relax.
- This exercise can be done at any time and is also very good for easing an aching back.

### Bridging:

- Start lying down with knees bent and feet resting on the bed, draw in your lower abdomen and tilt pelvis, as in exercise 1+2.
- Lift your bottom into the air and hold.
- Hold for 3-5 seconds and increase this to 10 seconds as able.



### The clam

- Lying on your side with knees and heels together.
- Lift the top leg off the other without rocking backwards and keeping heels together.
- Repeat 10 times each



### Hamstring stretch

- Sit/stand with your leg stretched and point your toes up towards the ceiling.
- Lean forwards over your straight leg. You should feel a stretch down the back of your leg.
- Hold for 30 seconds. Repeat each side 3 times.



### Where to find more information

- [www.nhs.uk/Conditions/coccydinia/Pages/Causes.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/coccydinia/Pages/Causes.aspx)
- [www.coccyx.org/](http://www.coccyx.org/)

For more information about the Trust, visit our website at [www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk](http://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk)  
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This document can be made available in other languages and large print upon request.

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