Tailbone (Coccyx) Pain

Understanding causes, symptoms and recovery

Tailbone Pain: Understanding and Management

A guide to symptoms, treatment and exercises



What is tailbone pain?

Tailbone pain, also known as coccydynia, is pain at the very bottom of the spine. It is often worse when sitting or moving from sitting to standing.

Common causes and symptoms

Recognising tailbone pain and how it is assessed

Common causes

Prolonged sitting on hard surfaces; a fall or direct injury; repeated strain or poor sitting posture; childbirth; sudden weight loss; or age-related changes. Sometimes no clear cause is found.

Common symptoms

Pain at the base of the spine between the buttocks; pain when sitting or standing up; discomfort leaning back; tenderness over the tailbone; sometimes pain during bowel movements or sexual activity.

How is tailbone pain diagnosed?

Diagnosis is usually based on symptoms and a physical examination. X-rays or scans are rarely required unless there has been a significant injury or symptoms do not improve.

Sitting advice

Avoid sitting for long periods. Lean slightly forward while seated and consider using a coccyx cushion or donut-shaped cushion.

Activity modification

Change position regularly, avoid activities that worsen pain, and gradually return to normal activity as symptoms allow.

Exercises and rehabilitation

Gentle movement to support recovery

Exercise examples

Gentle stretching and strengthening may help recovery. A physiotherapist can advise on exercises suitable for you.



What can I do to aid recovery?

Stay active within comfort, use good sitting posture, maintain a healthy weight and follow advice from your healthcare professional.

Treatment and management

Practical ways to manage pain and when to seek help

Pain relief

Paracetamol may help. Anti-inflammatory medicines may also be helpful if suitable for you.

Heat or ice

Ice may help after an injury. Heat can relax muscles and reduce discomfort. Use for 10–15 minutes at a time.

Physiotherapy

Physiotherapy can provide posture and movement advice, gentle mobility and strengthening exercises, and sometimes manual therapy.

Injections or surgery

These are rarely needed and may be considered only if pain is severe and long-lasting.

Outlook

Most cases of tailbone pain improve over weeks to months with simple treatment and self-management.

When to seek medical advice

Contact your GP or healthcare professional if pain worsens or persists, follows a significant injury, is severe or affects daily activities, or you develop numbness, weakness, or bowel or bladder changes.

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