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# Coccydynia

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**Coccydynia** is a term used to describe pain around the coccyx area, sometimes called your “tail bone”.

Coccydynia can occur if you injure your coccyx, such as a fall onto your bottom, or due to childbirth, but it can often come on gradually and may be due to repeated or prolonged postures or movements. In many cases, no obvious cause can be found.

Less common causes can be due to bony growth or arthritis and rare causes can be due to infection and cancer.

In most cases, the pain will improve over a few weeks or months, but occasionally it can last much longer and affect your ability to carry out normal daily activities.

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## You should see your GP if

- The pain does not start to improve within a few weeks
- Simple home treatments do not relieve the pain
- Your pain is very severe
- You also have bleeding from the rectum, a high temperature or pain away from your coccyx

Your GP will carry out an examination to check for more serious causes of your pain, such as infection or a fracture.

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## Common symptoms

- The main symptom is pain and tenderness in the area just above the buttocks.
  - The pain can be dull and achy most of the time with occasional sharp pains.
  - Usually worse with sitting
  - Moving from sitting to standing or prolonged standing can be painful
  - Pain during sex.
  - Pain when opening your bowels.
  - It can make sleeping difficult and driving or bending may be painful
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## Treatment

Coccydynia will often improve on its own after a few weeks and there are some simple treatments you can try at home to help reduce pain and allow you to get on with your everyday activities.

### How to help improve your symptoms:

- use a specially designed coccyx cushion – these can be bought online and from some shops; this may help to reduce the pressure on your tailbone while you're sitting down
- avoid prolonged sitting whenever possible – try to stand up and walk around regularly; leaning forward while seated may also help
- wear loose-fitting clothes – avoid clothing such as tight jeans or trousers that may put pressure on your tailbone
- apply warm and cold packs to your tailbone – warm packs include hot water bottles and microwaveable heating pads; cold packs are available as freezable gel-filled pads from pharmacies, or you can use a bag of frozen vegetables wrapped in a towel
- try laxatives (medicines to treat constipation) if the pain is worse when you are having a poo – many laxatives are available to buy from pharmacies and supermarkets without a prescription
- take over-the-counter painkillers

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**Pain is complex and can be influenced by many things. As well as the simple treatments above, it is important to also consider other self management advice and help for the pain and nervous system as a whole, these include:**

**Getting adequate pain control**, particularly early on as it has been shown that excessive or uncontrolled pain in the early stages can sometimes lead to a poorer outcome or slower recovery.

**Getting appropriate sleep** – sleep is when your body recovers and heals. Pain often interferes with the sleep cycle. Appropriate pain control can help, as well as considering factors such as avoiding caffeine late at night, getting sufficient activity throughout the day to make you tired and avoiding napping through the day. A small firm cushion between the knees when sleeping on the side may help

**Trying to remain active** wherever possible. It is well known that avoiding activity because of pain or spending long periods sitting or lying appear to hinder rather than help in the long term. Nerves get their blood flow through movement so remaining active can aid recovery and help manage symptoms.

**Trying some exercises** to keep your pelvis and nerve tissue moving. Movements of the pelvis help to keep the joints mobile and stop them from stiffening up. They also show the body that movement is safe, which can influence how much it will protect or create pain. There are some exercises at the end of this leaflet that can be helpful in regaining mobility when you develop coccyx pain and they can sometimes help with short term pain relief. As a rule, don't do anything that causes excessive pain, but don't be frightened of it either, you may have to accept some discomfort when you are trying to keep active and do the exercises.

**Relaxation/stress management** techniques – the more we learn about pain, the more we realise the impact that low mood, fear and anxiety/worries can have on symptoms. Pain and uncertainty around the cause can lead to some of these emotions/feelings, which in turn can contribute to more distress and pain worsening. Understanding and recognising this in yourself can be important and strategies such as Mindfulness or Relaxation techniques can sometimes help.

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**If symptoms persist for longer than 6 weeks, despite following the advice and exercises, you may benefit from a physiotherapy assessment. Please contact the TIMS service to arrange this**

In a very small number of cases, where conservative treatment has not helped, and the pain continues to affect your quality of life, referral for further investigations may be indicated. This can be arranged through your physiotherapist.

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## Exercises:

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### [Video](#)



Lying on your back with knees bent.

Pull pelvic floor muscles up and in. Hold approx. 10 secs.

Repeat 6 - 10 times.

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### [Video](#)



#### Bridge

Lie on your back, with knees bent and feet hip-width apart.

Draw in your abdominals and tighten your buttocks. Tilt your pelvis backwards and lift your pelvis and back up one vertebrae at a time. Lift only as high as you can while maintaining the pelvis position. Lower your pelvis down in a controlled manner.



Note: Don't let your lower back arch during the lift.

Repeat 6 - 10 times.

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### [Video](#)



Lying on your back with knees bent.

Tighten your stomach muscles and press the small of your back against the floor by letting your bottom rise. Hold 5 secs. - relax.

Repeat 10 times.

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### [Video](#)



Crawling position.

Hollow your back. Keep your neck long and elbows straight.

Repeat 10 times.

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## [Video](#)

Lie on your side with your knees bent. Tighten your pelvic floor muscles and gently pull your lower stomach in.



Lift your top knee as far as you can, without letting your pelvis rotate forward or back. Keep your feet together during the exercise.

Repeat   6   -   10   times.

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## [Video](#)

### Mini Band Resisted Sidelying Clam Shell



Start in side lying with your legs bent and a mini band around your thighs, close to your knees. Slightly lift your side off the floor.



Lift and rotate the upper knee upwards. Keep your feet together and pelvis pointing straight forward. Feel the tension in your buttocks. Lower the leg back to the starting position.

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Repeat   6   -   10   times.

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## For further information

Please email [ghnt.newcastlegatesheadtims@nhs.net](mailto:ghnt.newcastlegatesheadtims@nhs.net), ring on **0191 2138800** or visit our website at: [www.tims.nhs.uk](http://www.tims.nhs.uk) which provides online guidance and support on managing your musculoskeletal (MSK) condition effectively.

The NHS website also provides trusted online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare to help you manage your condition and/or inform your choices about your health: [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk).

## Useful links

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) can offer on-the-spot advice and information about the NHS. You can contact them on freephone **0800 032 02 02** or e-mail [northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk](mailto:northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk).



### Tyneside Integrated Musculoskeletal Service

TIMS is a partnership between Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust

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