Tailbone Pain (Coccydynia)

Why sitting hurts and what helps

Tips from your physiotherapist at Ace Sports Medicine

ACE SPORTS MEDICINE
UPPER MOUNT GRAVATT

The coccyx is one leg of the tripod that carries your weight when you sit. When it is bruised, stiff or overloaded, sitting and standing up become the sore moments. Most cases settle with conservative care.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT TAILBONE PAIN

1 WHAT IT IS

Coccydynia is pain arising from the coccyx, the tailbone at the very base of the spine, and the small joint above it. It is worst on sitting, leaning back and standing up.

PAIN AT THE BASE OF THE SPINE THAT SITTING PROVOKES.

2 WHO GETS IT

Women are five times more likely to develop coccydynia than men. The commonest triggers are a fall onto the tailbone, childbirth, and long periods on hard or poorly shaped seats.

FALLS, BIRTH AND HARD CHAIRS ARE THE USUAL CAUSES.

3 WHY SITTING HURTS

Seated, your weight rests on a three-point tripod: two sitting bones and the coccyx. Standing up flexes the coccyx, which is why that moment is often the sharpest.

THE TAILBONE CARRIES LOAD EVERY TIME YOU SIT.

4 THE GOOD NEWS

Conservative treatment is successful in about 90 percent of cases, and many settle without medical treatment. Injections and surgery are reserved for the small minority who do not respond.

MOST PEOPLE IMPROVE WITHOUT PROCEDURES.

5 WHAT HELPS

A cut-out or wedge cushion that unloads the coccyx, leaning forward as you stand, and breaking up long sitting all reduce the load on the tailbone.

UNLOAD IT, THEN KEEP MOVING.

6 PHYSIOTHERAPY

Assessment of tailbone joint mobility, the pelvic floor and hip muscles that attach to the coccyx, plus manual therapy and an exercise programme.

ADDRESS THE JOINT AND THE MUSCLES AROUND IT.

DO I NEED A SCAN?

Not usually as a first step. Coccydynia is diagnosed from the story and a physical assessment. Imaging is considered when pain follows a significant fall, does not behave like simple sitting pain, or fails to settle with conservative care.

WHEN TO SEEK HELP

- Tailbone pain lasting more than a few weeks
- Pain after a significant fall or difficult birth
- Night pain that wakes you
- Pain that is not related to sitting
- Fever or unexplained weight loss
- Any change in bowel or bladder control

Fever, weight loss or bowel and bladder changes need prompt medical review.

WHAT CAN A PHYSIOTHERAPIST DO?

- Confirm the pain is coming from the coccyx
- Assess the tailbone joint, pelvic floor and hips
- Advise on cushions, seating and sit-to-stand technique
- Provide manual therapy where appropriate
- Build a strength and mobility programme
- Refer on if red flags are present

WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW

If sitting has become the sore part of your day, start here:

Use a cut-out or wedge cushion | **Lean forward to stand up** | **Break up long sitting** | **Book a physio assessment**

Most cases settle with conservative care. Please discuss specifics at an appointment.

Helping You Perform at Your Best

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Need support with tailbone pain?

Book your appointment today

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