



Scan with your smartphone to get an e-version of this leaflet. You might need an app to scan this code.



Coccyx (tailbone) injury

***Information for
patients and carers***

**Accident and Emergency
Aberdeen Royal Infirmary**

What is the coccyx?

The coccyx is the lowest part of your backbone (spine). It usually has a little bit of movement and curves gently from the end of your spine into your pelvis.

A fall on to your tailbone in the seated position, usually against a hard surface, is the most common cause of coccyx injuries. This causes pain and discomfort in the tailbone area.

These injuries may cause a bruise or break (fracture) of the coccyx. Although they may be slow to heal, most coccyx injuries can be managed just with pain relief.

What is the treatment?

Coccyx injuries are often very painful, so when at home aim to control your pain and avoid irritating your coccyx.

Pain relief

It's important to take painkillers regularly to reduce pain and help you keep mobile.

Paracetamol and ibuprofen are effective painkillers if taken regularly. We don't routinely prescribe or dispense these as you can buy them over the counter at chemists and many other shops.

Read the dosage instructions on the packs carefully. Please also check if there are any reasons why you can't take these medications. Your family doctor or pharmacist can advise.

Cold packs and ice packs

For traumatic injuries, apply ice to the tailbone area. You can use a cold pack or a bag of frozen peas (always wrapped in a towel), applied for 10 to 15 minutes, four times a day, for the first few days after injury.

Remember **don't apply ice directly to your skin** or keep the cold pack on too long as you can get an ice burn. Using ice should not feel uncomfortable.

How do I avoid irritating my injury?

Sitting can be very uncomfortable after a coccyx injury. To make sitting less painful:

- Don't sit down for long periods of time
- Sit on an air cushion or "doughnut" pad
- Alternate between sitting on one side of the buttock (bottom) and the other
- Don't sit on very soft surfaces. Sinking into a soft chair can increase the pressure on the coccyx.
- Slouch to move your weight forward and off the coccyx. Please note: only slouch until you are well enough to sit properly again
- Sit on a large book with the area of the coccyx hanging off the back of the book.

Eating foods high in fibre to soften stools (poo) and to avoid constipation can also be helpful.

Contact telephone number

If you have any questions about your treatment, please call:

Emergency Department

Aberdeen Royal Infirmary

 01224 553306 or 550506

Or contact your GP

This leaflet is also available in large print.

Other formats and languages can be supplied on request. Please call Quality Development on 01224 554149 for a copy. Ask for leaflet 1596.

Feedback from the public helped us to develop this leaflet. If you have any comments on how we can improve it, please call 01224 554149 to let us know.