

Coccydynia or Coccyx pain

This causes pain on sitting on the tail end of the spine. The coccyx articulates with the sacrum and the tail end of the spine. It is actually 5 small fused vertebrae and is attached to the sacrum by a fibrous joint that does not usually move.

It is important to rule out sinister rare causes of the problem such as tumour e.g. chordoma, infections and fractures (if there is a history of trauma). Appropriate imaging may therefore involve MRI or plain xrays. In the vast majority these are normal.

The condition is much more common in women who have had babies by a normal vaginal delivery as this potentially weakens the pelvic floor. The condition is very rare in men. The muscles of the pelvic floor attach to the coccyx and any change in their function theoretically affects the coccyx which may then move either a small amount or a large amount.

A thorough examination of the coccyx with a rectal examination is mandatory and I prefer to do this under anaesthetic (very short) and inject the painful area with local anaesthetic and steroid. I try to inject into the joint between the coccyx and the sacrum as well as the area around the coccyx. If the coccyx is very malaligned a manipulation may be attempted but only if there is malalignment. To manipulate the coccyx under other circumstances may cause more pain and continued problems.

Injections are frequently all that is required and formal excision (coccygectomy) should be avoided if at all possible – only 60-70% success rate and problems with wound healing and what to do if pain persists?

As a first port of call pain killers, a cushion and pelvic floor exercise may help.