



An tOspidéal Náisiúnta Máithreachais
The National Maternity Hospital

Physiotherapy Department

Managing coccyx pain after birth



Giving birth is thought to be the most common cause of coccyx pain.

The coccyx, commonly known as the tailbone, is a small triangular bone located at the base of the spine.

Here are some tips and exercises to allow your coccyx to recover well after birth.



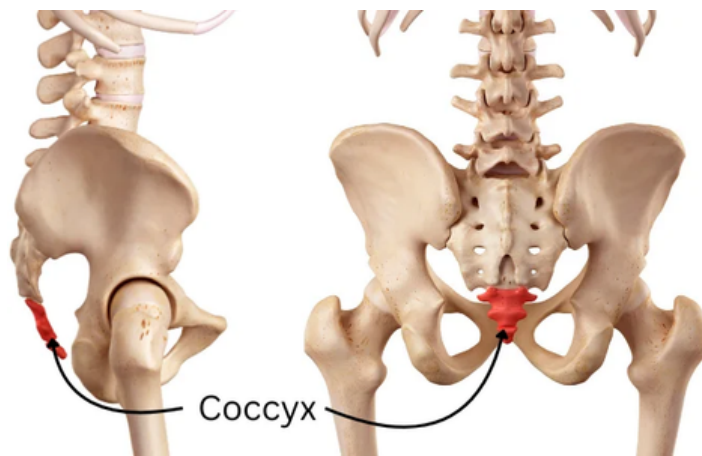
Visit our website: www.nmh.ie

Causes and symptoms

Postnatal coccyx pain

During pregnancy, your coccyx will become more flexible towards the end of your third trimester (from week 27 to the birth). This is due to a release of hormones in your body which allow your coccyx, and the part of your spine above it, to bend and give way when you give birth.

In some cases, childbirth can cause the muscles and ligaments (stretchy tissue that connects bones) around your coccyx to overstretch. This leads to coccyx pain.



- Pain is usually felt in the coccyx area after birth.
- Tasks that can increase pain are **sitting down (especially on a hard surface), standing up from sitting or emptying your bowels.**
- Standing and moving around usually helps to relieve the pain.
- It can take 6-12 weeks for the coccyx to heal after birth and the pain to resolve, for some people this may last longer.

If you experience coccyx pain on the postnatal ward, speak to your midwife for a referral to physiotherapy. You can also contact us for ongoing issues upto 8 weeks after your birth.

See our website page for contact details

Treatment

Comfort & Movement

Here are a few tips to follow to help ease your coccyx pain and to encourage it's recovery after birth



Rest

Side-lying is the best position to rest. It takes the pressure off your coccyx. If you can feed in this position it can also help.



Pain relief

Take regular, adequate pain relief. Talk to your doctor, midwife or pharmacist for advice if you are unsure of what to take.



Cold therapy

Wrap ice pack/frozen peas in a tea towel and place on the painful area for 10-20 minutes. This can be used up to 2 hourly to 3 times a day if required.



Cushion for sitting

Try to use a cushion or some towel rolls every time you sit down. Using specific coccyx cushions (U shaped) or gel cushions can also relieve pressure on the coccyx.



Avoid constipation

Ease bowel movements by ensuring you are drinking adequate fluids and eating fibre. Use a footstool in the toilet. If anxious consider a gentle laxative such as lactulose



Posture and movement

While posture is important, remember any posture for a prolonged period is going to cause discomfort. It is recommended to get up and move around every 30 minutes. Your best posture is your next posture!

Positioning

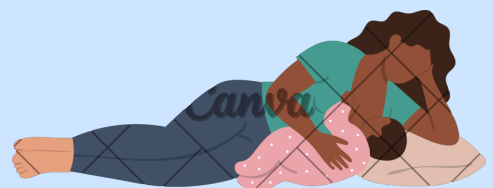
Sitting

Prolonged sitting can increase coccyx pain. Try to avoid slumping. It can be helpful to sit in a cushioned chair with good support at the lower back. Using a coccyx cushion or some rolled up towels can be helpful to take the pressure off the area when sitting, feeding and car journeys.



Feeding your baby

Feeding your baby in sidelying is a nice option for during the day and especially night time if it is possible for you and your baby.

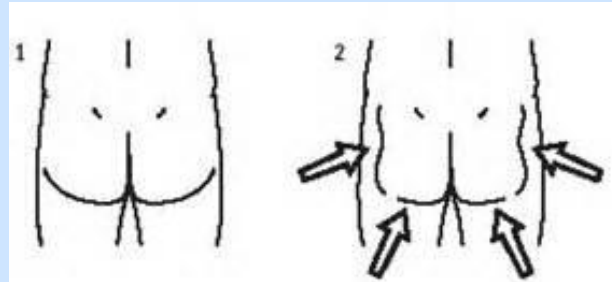


Exercises

Here are some exercises to help in the immediate stage after delivery. Please see our c-section and vaginal birth leaflet for specific exercises for your birth.

Glute contract and relax

Stabilise the area when you move. As you move try to contract the buttocks, reducing pain to the coccyx. Make sure to consciously relax your buttocks muscles at other times to avoid unnecessary clenching.

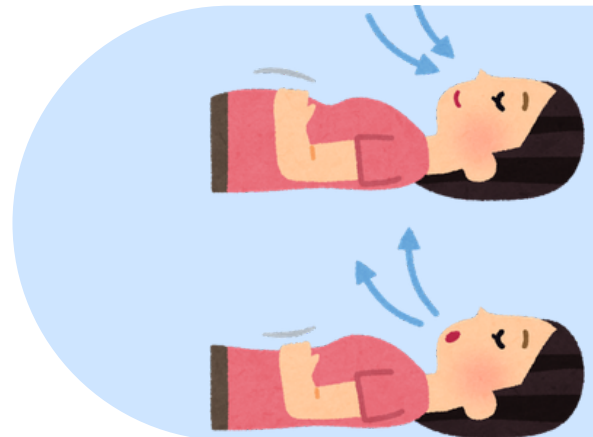


Diaphragmatic breathing

By "just breathing" in the early days following birth you begin the healing process, gently moving your deep abdominals, diaphragm and pelvic floor.

By slowly breathing all the way into the lower lungs and letting the tummy flop out, this helps to relax the pelvic floor.

Practice 10-15 deep breaths throughout the day in lying or sitting



Gentle stretches

You can start some gentle stretches for the pelvis to help your coccyx pain. Check out our vaginal and c-section birth leaflets for exercise guidance specific to your birth.



Pelvic Floor Relaxation

What is the Pelvic Floor?

The pelvic floor is a sling of muscles stretching from the pubic bone to the tailbone. It supports the bladder, bowel, and womb, helps maintain continence, contributes to sexual function, and provides core stability.

The pelvic floor must relax fully so that we can empty our bladder, empty our bowel. The pelvic floor muscles can become tense if we experience coccyx pain after birth.

It is important to practice release as much as contraction.



This exercise helps you sense the difference between a gentle contraction and a full release.

How to practice

- Inhale to begin
- As you exhale, gently squeeze or lift the pelvic floor once.
- This time as you inhale, bring your attention to the pelvic floor and imagine it softening and releasing. Think: “Relaxing to open the vagina,” “Lengthening the pelvic floor,” or “Softening the muscles.”

Routine

- Practice for 5–10 minutes, 2–3 times per day, ideally lying down.
- After each gentle squeeze, fully relax.
- Take 2–3 slow breaths, feeling the pelvic floor soften on each inhale.
- Repeat only when you clearly feel the release

Bowel Care

Bowels

It is advisable to avoid straining as much as possible when you are experiencing coccyx pain. Avoid fighting the urge to open your bowels in order to prevent constipation.

The following will help you to comfortably pass a bowel motion:



- Use a foot stool to ensure your knees are higher than your hips
- Maintain a straight back avoid slumping
- Lean forward resting forearms on thighs
- Practice your deep breathing to help the pelvic floor relax
- Swell your tummy rather than straining - imagine you are blowing out birthday candles or saying the word "OOooo"
- **Relax and don't rush**

Avoiding constipation is important following delivery. **The following can help soften the consistency of your stool can help with stimulating digestion:**

1



Variety of fruit and veg

2



Nuts and seeds in the diet (chia seeds, flax seeds)

3



Regular fluids (water)

4



Movement & exercise



The National Maternity Hospital

HEALTHY BODIES AFTER BIRTH

An information session on caring and reconnecting with your body as it recovers after birth

Topics include:

- Bladder & Bowel Care
- Abdominal Care
- Pelvic Floor Advice
- Returning to Movement
- and more!

Every Friday at 11am

Online



Physiotherapist led information session
Email njordan@nmh.ie to book your place

www.nmh.ie