

# Information following a coccygectomy

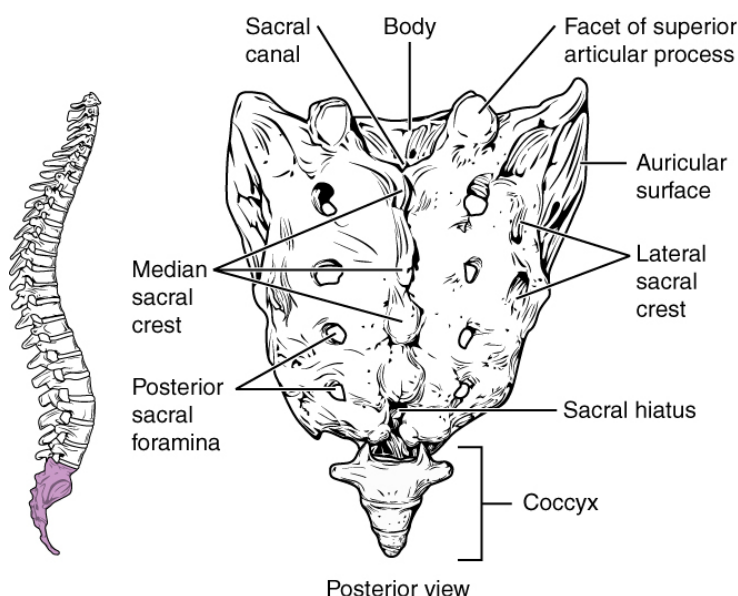
You have had a coccygectomy (surgery of the coccyx – tailbone). This leaflet gives information and aftercare advice to aid your recovery.

## What is a coccygectomy?

Coccygectomy is the surgical removal of the coccyx (tailbone) where conservative treatment has failed to relieve the patient's coccydynia. Coccydynia is defined as pain in the region of the coccyx.

## What are the treatments for coccygectomy?

Initial treatments for coccydynia include anti-inflammatories, cortico-steroid injections and physiotherapy. Surgery is considered a last resort.

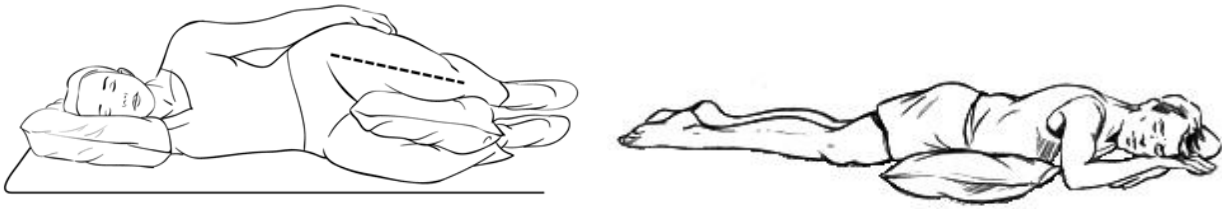


## What does surgery involve?

During the surgery, which is usually done under a general anaesthetic (you are asleep), a cut is made in the skin directly over the coccyx. The coccyx is removed and the prominent end of the sacrum (the bone to which the coccyx is attached) is smoothed off. The wound will be closed with dissolvable stitches and covered with a dressing.

## Key points following surgery

- You may get up and mobilise (move) around the ward the same day as your surgery and will be discharged home as soon as you are independent.
- Unless you have difficulty with mobilising and require a walking aid, physiotherapy after the operation is unnecessary.
- Pain is the only limiting factor and we suggest you take regular pain relief, following the dosage instruction, and return to your normal activities as soon as possible.
- Sitting is likely to be the most uncomfortable position for several weeks after your operation. You may find investing in a gel-filled cushion beneficial or try leaning forward and supporting your weight on a flat surface such as a table.
- Avoid tight-fitting jeans or trousers until your wound has healed well and the pain has subsided. It is also advisable to wear flat shoes.
- It is advisable to sleep on your side initially but some people find this uncomfortable so you may prefer to sleep on your front with or without a pillow under your hips. Some people may find sleeping on their side comfortable with a pillow between their knees.



- You will have swelling in the area. Ice packs will help decrease the swelling but should never be put directly onto the skin. Wrap the ice pack in a damp tea towel or towel before placing it on the skin. If the wound has not fully healed, make sure there is a waterproof dressing between the ice pack and the wound. The ice pack should be left on no longer than 10 minutes and leave at least 20 minutes before applying another ice pack.
- Heat packs can be used to relieve pain once the swelling has gone down. These should be wrapped in a dry towel before being applied to the skin. Do not leave the heat pack on for any longer than 10 minutes and regularly check the skin every couple of minutes for heat damage and remove it if the skin becomes very red or mottled.
- You may return to **driving** as soon as you are comfortable to sit in the car long enough to get to where you wish to go. It is always advisable to try an emergency stop just to make sure this is possible before driving any distance.
- You may return to **work** when you are comfortable enough to do so. If you have a job that requires sitting for long periods of time you may need longer off work.
- When your pain has settled sufficiently for you to **return to your sports and hobbies**, you may do so.
- Following surgery 80-90% of patients will experience relief of their symptoms but 10-20% will continue to have pain. Full recovery following this surgery can take several months to a few years.

## Wound care

- At the time of surgery, the skin is cleaned thoroughly with chlorhexidine antiseptic wash and an antibiotic will be administered intravenously (i.e. into the vein). However, the most common complication after surgery is wound infection, which occurs in as many as 30% of patients. This is due to the coccyx being so close to the rectum and anus (back passage). Therefore it is very important to ensure you keep this area clean.
- There will be a shower-proof dressing in place after the operation and the ward will provide you with a spare dressing to take home.
- The nursing staff will also give you a discharge letter advising you when to see your practice nurse for a wound check.
- Dissolvable stitches are used so they do not need to be removed.
- If you have concerns about your wound after discharge please contact your GP or practice nurse.

## Follow up appointment

You will be seen by your surgeon around 6-8 weeks after your surgery in the Trauma and Orthopaedic Clinic, Level 2, South Block.

## Contacting us

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**Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.**

Orthopaedic Physiotherapy, June 2023

Next review due: June 2025