

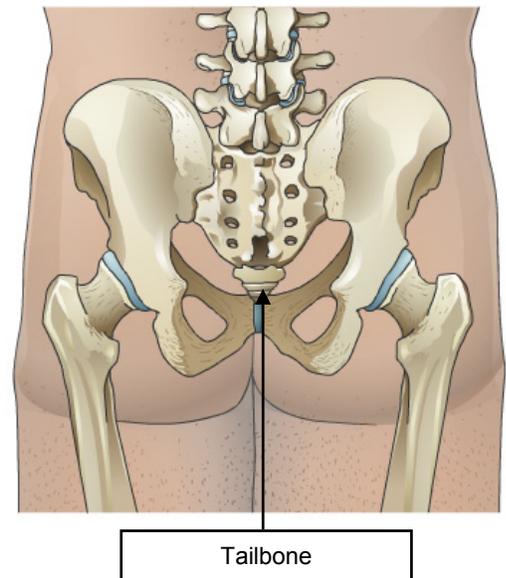
Introduction

The tailbone is the small bone at the bottom of your backbone, or spine. Many different disorders can affect the tailbone. Tailbone disorders can cause pain in the tailbone area. These disorders can also cause pain or numbness in the legs due to pressure on nerves in the tailbone area and a mass or growth you can see or feel.

This reference summary explains tailbone disorders. It covers symptoms of tailbone disorders and treatments for certain tailbone disorders.

The Tailbone

The spine protects the spinal cord and the nerves that go to different parts of the body. The spine is formed of solid bones called vertebrae. The vertebrae are separated by softer disks. These disks help cushion the vertebrae during movement.



The tailbone is at the bottom of the backbone, or spine. The tailbone is also called the coccyx. It is made up of 3 to 5 small bones. These bones are fused together.

General Symptoms

Many tailbone disorders have similar symptoms. The main symptom is pain in the tailbone area. The pain may come and go. It may also be worse when sitting.

Other common symptoms of tailbone disorders include:

- Pain or numbness in the legs.
- Pain during bowel movements.
- Redness and swelling near the tailbone.
- Weakness in the legs.

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Some tailbone disorders may also cause:

- A mass or growth you can feel or see.
- Fever.
- Foul-smelling drainage.
- Pain during sex.
- Problems controlling the bowel or bladder.

Talk to your health care provider if you notice any of these symptoms or other changes. Finding a problem early makes treatment easier in most cases.

Coccydynia

Coccydynia is pain around the area of the tailbone. Often the cause is unknown.

Some known causes of coccydynia include:

- Abnormal, excessive movement of the tailbone.
- Infection, tumor or fracture of the tailbone.
- Injury or trauma, such as from falls or childbirth.

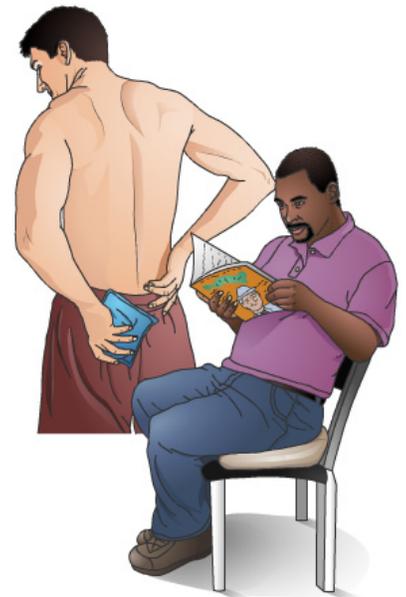
Sometimes coccydynia may be caused by prolonged sitting on a hard or narrow surface. Coccydynia usually goes away on its own within a few weeks or months. But there are steps you can take to treat tailbone pain in the meantime.

To relieve tailbone pain:

- Apply heat or ice to the affected area.
- Sit completely upright or lean forward while sitting down.
- Sit on a doughnut-shaped pillow or cushion.
- Take over-the-counter pain relievers.

If tailbone pain does not improve with time, you may need additional treatments such as:

- Physical therapy.
- Medication.
- Surgery.



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A physical therapist might show you exercises to strengthen your abdomen and pelvic floor muscles. These exercises can help treat tailbone pain in some cases. Some medications can help relieve tailbone pain. These include certain antidepressants or anti-epileptic medications. An injection of a local anesthetic into the tailbone may also relieve pain for a few weeks.

Rarely, tailbone pain may be treated with a surgery to remove the coccyx. This treatment may be an option when all other treatments fail.

Pilonidal Cyst

A pilonidal cyst is an abnormal pocket of skin that forms near the tailbone. It often forms above the crease of the buttocks. The cyst often contains skin debris, or waste, as well as hair. If the cyst becomes infected, it may contain pus. If a pilonidal cyst becomes infected, it is called a pilonidal abscess. It can be painful. Anyone can get a pilonidal cyst. But they are more common in young men. They frequently happen between puberty and age 40.

Some people are at increased risk of having a pilonidal cyst. This includes people who:

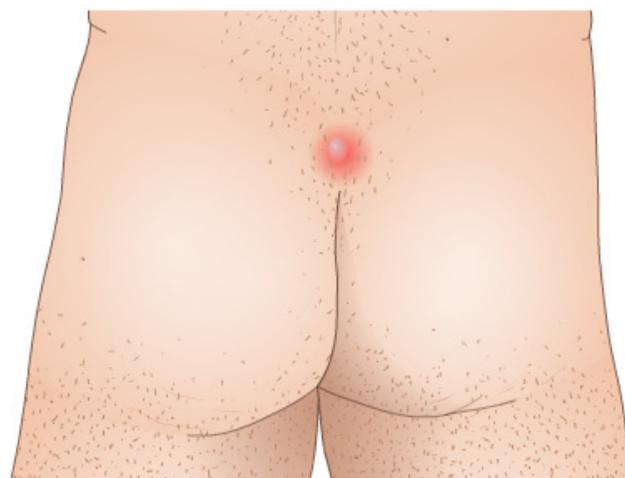
- Are overweight or obese.
- Have thick, stiff body hair.
- Sit for long periods of time, such as truck drivers.

It is not known for sure what causes pilonidal cysts. But there are many possible causes, including:

- Loose hairs and pressure against the skin.
- Skin stretching and ruptured hair follicles.
- Trauma to the tailbone area.

Other possible risk factors of pilonidal cysts are:

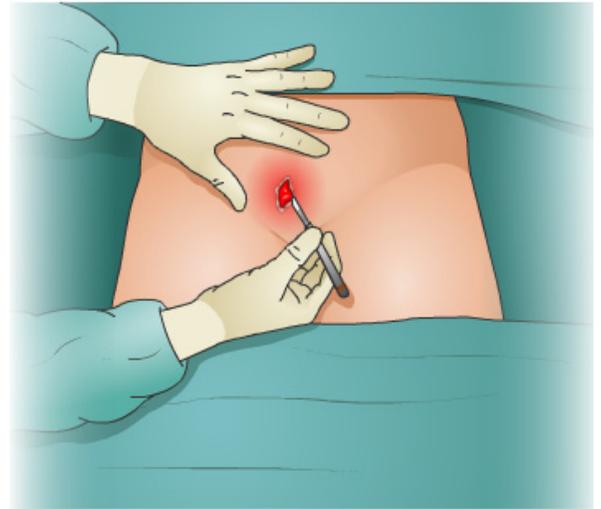
- Shape of the area above the buttocks.
- Problems in the womb before birth.
- Family history of pilonidal cysts.
- History of blocked hair follicles or skin problems.



Pilonidal Cyst

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Treatment is needed if a pilonidal cyst becomes infected. The first line of treatment is often draining the cyst. Any hair follicles in the cyst may also be removed. After a cyst is drained, sometimes dead skin and tissue are removed. This improves the rate of healing. Pilonidal cysts often happen again after treatment. If this is the case, further surgical treatment may be needed.



Most cases of pilonidal cysts require removal with surgical treatment. During surgery, the entire cyst is removed to help prevent the cyst from re-forming. In some cases, the wound is closed right away after surgery. In other cases, the wound may be left open so it can heal from the inside out. This can help reduce the risk of recurring cysts.

In some cases, surgery may involve removing a small amount of tissue to make the shape of the area above the buttocks flatter. This is called a cleft lift or modified Karydakis procedure. It is a type of flap surgery. In flap surgeries, a tissue flap from the buttocks is used to re-shape the area. Making the area above the buttocks flatter reduces bacterial growth and stops loose hairs from collecting and puncturing the skin.

Chordoma

A chordoma is a rare tumor that usually happens in the spine, in the tailbone or at the base of the skull. It is a cancerous tumor that grows fairly slowly. But it can spread to other organs, such as the lungs. A chordoma is a type of bone cancer. It represents only about 1 percent of all cancerous bone tumors.

Cancer begins in your cells, which are the building blocks of your body. Normally, your body forms new cells as you need them by replacing old cells that die. Sometimes this process goes wrong and a tumor forms. If a tumor is cancerous, cells from the tumor can invade other tissues throughout the body.

Cancer cells can spread to different parts of the body through blood vessels and lymph channels.



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Most patients with chordomas are between 40 and 70 years of age. Sometimes this tumor can happen in younger patients. The cause of chordomas is unknown. Chordomas are not inherited. Surgery in combination with radiation therapy is often used to treat chordomas. Radiation therapy uses high-energy x-rays or other types of radiation to kill cancer cells or keep them from growing.

Summary

The tailbone is the small bone at the bottom of your backbone, or spine. Many different disorders can affect the tailbone, including:

- Coccydynia.
- Pilonidal cyst.
- Chordoma.

Tailbone disorders can cause pain in the tailbone area. These disorders can also cause pain or numbness in the legs due to pressure on nerves in the tailbone area and a mass or growth you can see or feel.

Treatment for tailbone disorders depends on the cause. Treatment may include:

- Physical therapy.
- Medication.
- Surgery.
- Other medical procedures.



Talk to your health care provider if you notice any symptoms of tailbone disorders or other changes. Finding a problem early makes treatment easier in most cases.

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