

Tailbone Injuries

What is a tailbone injury?

Your tailbone (coccyx) is actually made up of several bones that are located at the end of your lower back. Tailbones can be bruised or broken.

How does it occur?

A tailbone injury usually occurs from a direct fall onto the coccyx.

What are the symptoms?

Your tailbone is very tender. You have pain when you are sitting. You may also have pain when you walk and when you have a bowel movement.

How is it diagnosed?

Your health care provider will review your symptoms and examine your back and tailbone. He or she may order an x-ray to see if your tailbone is broken.

How is it treated?

An injured tailbone needs time to heal. A bruised tailbone may take several days to several weeks to completely heal. A fractured tailbone takes 4 to 6 weeks to heal. In either case, people sometimes have pain for a long time.

While your tailbone injury is healing it is very important to use a doughnut cushion when you are sitting. A doughnut cushion may be purchased at a medical supply house or you may use a child's swimming inner tube.

You should place an ice pack on your tailbone for 20 to 30 minutes every 3 to 4 hours for 2 to 3 days or until the pain goes away. Your health care provider may prescribe an anti-inflammatory or pain medications.

It is important to avoid constipation while your tailbone is healing. Drink plenty of fluids and increase the amount of fiber in your diet.

How can I prevent tailbone injuries?

Most tailbone injuries are caused by accidents that cannot be prevented. In some contact sports such as football or hockey, it is important to wear protective equipment.

Upper Back Pain

What is upper back pain?

Your upper back is also called your thoracic back, the part of the back where the ribs attach. Upper back pain is pain between your neck and your low back.

How does it occur?

The bones in your back are called vertebrae. Back pain is usually caused when ligaments or muscles attaching to the vertebrae are injured. Upper back pain can come from a twisting motion, poor posture, overuse, or an injury. It is very common for someone to injure their upper back when carrying objects, throwing, bending or twisting. Sitting at a desk for a prolonged time can cause upper back muscles to tighten and become stiff. Upper back pain can come even come from vigorous coughing or sneezing.

Sometimes upper back pain is caused by scoliosis, a curve in the spine that has developed during the adolescent growth period. In scoliosis there is usually an imbalance of the muscles of the upper back.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of upper back pain may include:

- ▶ pain in the upper back
- ▶ muscle spasms
- ▶ pain when you take a deep breath
- ▶ pain when your back is touched or when you move
- ▶ pain when you move your shoulders or bend your neck forward.

How is it diagnosed?

Your provider will take your history, review your symptoms and examine your back.

How is it treated?

The early stages of back pain with muscle spasms should be treated with ice packs for 20 to 30 minutes every 4 to 6 hours for the first 2 to 3 days. You may use a frozen gel pack, crushed ice, or a bag of frozen peas. After you have iced for 2 to 3 days, you may start to use moist heat to help loosen up stiff muscles.

Your provider may prescribe an anti-inflammatory medication, muscle relaxants, or other medication. Massage to the inflamed muscles will help. Your provider will recommend exercises to help your back.

When can I return to my sport or activity?

The goal of rehabilitation is to return you to your sport or activity as soon as is safely possible. If you return too soon you may worsen your injury, which could lead to permanent damage. Everyone recovers from injury at a different rate. Return to your sport or activity will be determined by how soon your back recovers, not by how many days or weeks it has been since your injury occurred. In general, the longer you have symptoms before you start treatment, the longer it will take to get better.

