What is the coccyx?

The coccyx (pronounced coc-six) is often referred to as the ‘tail bone’, because it forms the last remaining part of the human ‘tail’ (at the end of the spine).

It is located just above the cleft in the buttocks, and curves forward so that it points towards the front of the body.

There are three small bones that make up the coccyx. These bones are usually loosely fused together, and the coccyx becomes more flexible in pregnant women to allow them to give birth more easily.

Sacro-coccygeal joint pain

The coccyx (tail bone) can be a pain source after injury to the area or inflammation. The coccyx is painful to sit on and requires avoidance of direct pressure by sitting on one buttock or using pillows. Anti-inflammatory medications help some patients. Most acute episodes settle within a few weeks.

If the pain continues then an injection to the coccyx and sacro-coccygeal joint are offered. This is usually performed under a brief general anaesthetic.

What are the alternatives?

It is very likely that you will have already tried other treatments, such as pain killers and physiotherapy before being referred for this treatment. Your consultant will discuss any alternatives available to you.

What are the risks or possible complications?

As with all procedures, there are some risks. These risks vary from person to person and your consultant will discuss these with you. Precautions are always taken to reduce the risks as far as possible, but the following may occur:

- Failure of the procedure to help
- Worsening of pain (temporary or permanent)
- Bleeding or bruising in the injected area

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• Infection in the injected area
• Numbness of the injected area
• Allergic reaction to the drugs used.

What will happen?

You will be given a date to come to hospital for the injection. This will take place in the Day Surgery Unit. You should arrange for someone to bring you to the Unit and to collect you afterwards.

Before your procedure you will be seen and assessed by a nurse. The procedure will be explained to you and the nurse will check that you have signed a consent form.

Is there anything I should do before the procedure?

You should have nothing to eat for 6 hours before your appointment. You can drink clear fluids (water, black tea or coffee) up to 2 hours before your appointment.

The injection is carried out using X-rays to find the correct position for the injection. Since X-rays can be harmful in high doses, we will keep the dose to a minimum. If you are unsure whether you are or if there is any chance of you being pregnant you must tell us before coming to hospital.

If you take any drugs to thin your blood (anticoagulants or platelet inhibitors), it is very important to let the consultant know in advance. Failure to do so could result in your treatment being cancelled on the day. These types of drugs include Warfarin and Clopidogrel (Plavix™). If you are unsure please speak to your consultant or contact the Day Surgery Unit on 01722 336262 ext 4554 (7.30 am - 7pm) before your appointment.

You should arrange for a responsible adult to drive you home afterwards as you will not be able to drive yourself home. You can take a taxi if you wish.

What happens during the procedure?

• You will be asked to lie in a comfortable position.
• A small needle will be put into a vein in the back of your hand after which you will be given a general anaesthetic. This means that you will be asleep for the procedure.
• When you are asleep an injection of steroid and local anaesthetic will be injected into the painful area.
• Afterward a small dressing will be put over the injection site.

What happens after the procedure?

You will rest in the Unit for about an hour before being allowed home. You must not drive yourself home afterwards.

What should I do once I get home?

It is important that you rest for a couple of hours before you start to resume your normal
activities. Most people find that their pain reduces within a few days of the injection. For a small number of people however, the pain does not change, or can be worse.

If you have any concerns when you get home please contact the Day Surgery Unit on 01722 336262 ext 4554 or contact your GP and tell them that you have had this procedure.

**Will I be seen again after the procedure?**

An appointment will be made for you to be seen again in outpatients around 12 weeks after the injection.