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Colon & Rectal Surgery

## Levator Spasms

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Levator spasms are best described as a charley horse of the pelvic muscles. These spasms may be a cramp of the muscles in the pelvis. They frequently occur at night and usually last just a short time.

Other names for this syndrome are coccygodynia, though few patients actually have coccygeal (tailbone) pain, levator ani syndrome, levator ani spasm syndrome, proctalgia fugax and proctodynia.

Occasionally, patients with this condition feel as if they are sitting on a ball or have a ball inside of their rectum. Levator spasms are more common in people under stress. They can be very painful and debilitating but tend to slowly get better over time.

No one knows why people suffer from levator spasms. It is important to make sure that other possible reasons for pelvic pain are eliminated before treating the condition. If results are not obtained with simple measures, more extensive tests may be required.

The spasms have no known cure. However, many things help relieve the pain:

- Warm sitz baths or heating pad
- Exercises to strengthen the pelvic muscles
- Massaging of the anus
- Muscle relaxers
- Warm-water enemas
- Non-steroid anti-inflammatory medications

Patients respond differently to each of these measures. Many of our patients have experienced very good results with warm sitz baths and muscle-strengthening exercises. Occasionally, muscle relaxers and/or Advil is needed. If you do not get relief with these measures, return to your doctor for further tests or treatments.

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