

Pilonidal cyst

WHAT IS A PILONIDAL CYST?

A pilonidal cyst is an abnormal pocket in the skin, typically near the tailbone where the buttocks separates. They usually occur when the hair follicles become plugged. This can happen to anyone; however, it is most common in teenagers.

WHY DID I GET A PILONIDAL CYST?

Pilonidal cysts typically occur when follicles become clogged by hair and debris. These plugged follicles may push deeper into the skin so the hair will grow into the skin rather than out of the skin. The body treats the hair as a foreign body, like a splinter in your foot, causing inflammation and tenderness. If the irritation continues, a tract (small hole or tunnel under the skin) may form, increasing the chances of infection. An infection can lead to a pilonidal abscess, which must be drained, and antibiotics may be required.

WHAT ARE SOME RISK FACTORS?

- A large amount of body hair that surrounds the area.
- Hair is thick, coarse or curly.
- Sitting for more than six hours a day.
- Previous injury to the affected area.

WHAT ARE THE MOST COMMON SYMPTOMS OF A PILONIDAL CYST?

The most common symptoms include:

- Pain, especially when sitting.
- Pus or blood drainage from the area.
- Redness or tenderness in the area.

Symptoms can develop quickly and, if not treated, will continue to get worse. It is important to seek professional medical care immediately once symptoms begin.

WHAT IS THE TREATMENT FOR PILONIDAL CYST?

There are many different options for treatment, and each one will be discussed in depth with you and your child's surgeon.

Options include:

- Antibiotics: If the infection is found early, a course of antibiotics is enough to treat the cyst and symptoms. It is essential to let your surgeon know immediately if symptoms become worse.
- Incision and drainage: This procedure can be performed in your doctor's office or the operating room. The doctor opens the infected area and will insert a small drain to assist in the removal of the pus and infection. The drain will be removed at your doctor's office in approximately one week, or it may fall out on its own.
- Minimally invasive surgery: This option is typically saved for patients who have recurrent pilonidal cysts. The surgery will involve cleaning and removing the pilonidal pits and closing the wound.

WHAT CAN I DO TO PREVENT IT FROM RECURRING?

There are multiple things children and their parents can do to prevent the recurrence of pilonidal cysts. The most important is to get rid of excess hair in the area and keep it from growing back. Options include:

- Shaving.
- Hair removal cream such as Nair.
- Laser hair removal.

Other important factors to prevent recurrence of pilonidal cysts include:

- Daily showering and washing the area with gentle exfoliation.
- Weight loss.
- Avoiding sitting for prolonged periods.

WHEN SHOULD I FOLLOW UP?

Please call the office to schedule a follow-up appointment for one week after your surgery. At that time, the loop placed during surgery will be removed. If the loop falls out prior to your scheduled appointment, do not be concerned and still follow up as scheduled.

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