

GS15lite Surgery for Pilonidal Sinus

This document will give you information about surgery for a pilonidal sinus. If you have any questions, you should ask your GP or other relevant health professional.

What is a pilonidal sinus?

A pilonidal sinus is a problem in the natal cleft (area just above the buttocks).

Loose hairs fall off the neck or back and collect in the natal cleft, causing small holes to form in the skin or getting into existing holes.

As the hairs carry bacteria, the holes can become infected. This causes an abscess to form or a discharge that is released through a tunnel (sinus) out onto the skin (see figure 1).

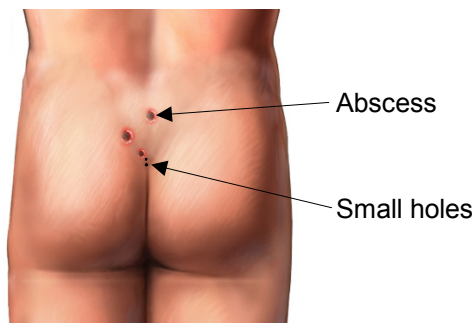


Figure 1

Position of pilonidal sinus showing small holes and an abscess

What are the benefits of surgery?

Surgery is the most dependable way to remove the pilonidal sinus.

Are there any alternatives to surgery?

You can treat an occasional discharge with antibiotics.

What does the operation involve?

The operation is performed under a general anaesthetic and usually takes about half an hour.

Your surgeon will remove the sinus and infected tissue.

What complications can happen?

1 General complications of any operation

- Pain
- Bleeding
- Unsightly scarring
- Blood clots

2 Specific complications of this operation

- Partial breakdown of the wound
- Slow healing
- Numbness around the wound

How soon will I recover?

You should be able to go home the same day.

You should be able to return to work after two to three weeks.

Regular exercise should help you to return to normal activities as soon as possible. Before you start exercising, you should ask a member of the healthcare team or your GP for advice.

Occasionally the pilonidal sinus comes back.

Summary

Pilonidal sinus is a common problem in young people. It can cause an abscess or persistent discharge and is best treated by surgery.

Further information

- NHS smoking helpline on 0800 022 4332 and at www.smokefree.nhs.uk
- www.eatwell.gov.uk – for advice on maintaining a healthy weight
- www.eidoactive.co.uk – for information on how exercise can help you
- www.aboutmyhealth.org – for support and information you can trust
- NHS Direct on 0845 46 47 (0845 606 46 47 – textphone)

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Author: Mr Simon Parsons DM FRCS (Gen. Surg.)
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