

Pilonidal Cyst/Abscess

A pilonidal cyst is a pocket in the skin that usually contains hair or skin debris. A pilonidal cyst is typically located near the tailbone at the top of the cleft of the buttocks.

A pilonidal cyst may remain harmless unless it becomes infected, causing an acute abscess.

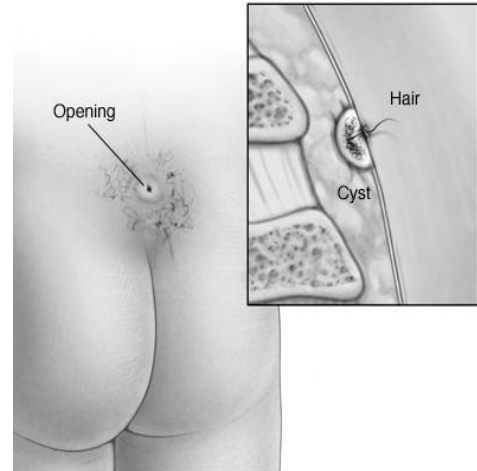
Pilonidal abscess tend to occur in young men more often because they have more body hair. These cysts occur most often after puberty and are rarely seen after age 40.

Symptoms of a pilonidal abscess include:

- Pain – making it difficult to sit or walk
- Localized swelling
- Reddening of the skin
- Drainage of pus or blood from an opening in the skin near the swelling
- Foul smell from the draining pus

Risk Factors for a pilonidal abscess include:

- Obesity
- Inactive lifestyle
- Occupation or sports that require prolonged sitting
- Tight fitting clothing



© MAYO FOUNDATION FOR MEDICAL EDUCATION AND RESEARCH. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Pilonidal abscesses are diagnosed based on symptoms and an examination.

Most often with minor abscesses, oral antibiotics are prescribed to stop the infection and warm compresses/soaks are encouraged to help relieve the pain and encourage drainage.

If the abscess is more acute, it can be drained by making a small incision with a scalpel. This releases the pus, reduces the pain and enhances healing. This procedure is performed with local anesthesia.

In rare instances (about 40%), these abscesses will reoccur and a chronic cyst will develop. This cyst will be at risk of developing an abscess over and over again, so surgical treatment may be indicated.

Web links for more information:

Web MD: <http://www.webmd.com/skin-problems-and-treatments/guide/pilonidal-cyst>

Mayo Clinic: <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/pilonidal-cyst/basics/definition/con-20025007>

Family Doctor.org: <http://familydoctor.org/familydoctor/en/diseases-conditions/pilonidal-cyst.html>

If you are a registered Millersville University student and you have questions or you need to make an appointment, please call Millersville University Health Services at 871-5250.