



What is a Pilonidal Sinus?

A pilonidal sinus is a small hole or tunnel in the skin at the top of the buttocks, where they divide (the cleft). The hair curls and penetrates the skin, causing irritation, leading to the development of a sinus. There can be more than one opening.

What causes a Pilonidal Sinus?

- Deep, hairy natal cleft;
- Age >40, puberty (hormone changes);
- Males are affected twice as often as females;
- Excessive sweating or friction;
- Obesity;
- Sedentary lifestyle.

Symptoms

- A pit near the top of the buttocks crease;
- Pain;
- Inflamed, swollen skin;
- Pus or blood leaking from an opening in the skin;
- An odor from draining pus.

What is the treatment?

Surgical procedure under general anaesthetic is required to remove (cut out) the sinus, leaving the wound open to heal from the bottom up. This involves daily wound hygiene and dressing changes until the wound heals.



Pilonidal Sinus Wound Self-Care & Dressing Guide

What You Can Do to Help Healing

- Keep the dressing clean and dry at all times. Never leave the wound open to air.
- Change the dressing as instructed or if it becomes soiled, leaks, or falls off.
- Stop smoking – this has the biggest positive impact on healing.
- Take medications exactly as prescribed by your doctor.
- Control blood sugar levels if you have diabetes.
- Maintain a healthy weight through diet and activity.
- Avoid friction or pressure on the wound area

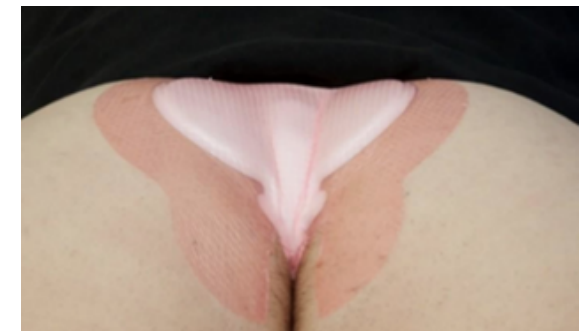
Practice daily hygiene

- shower or bathe daily, and more often if sweating or after bowel movements. Gently pat the area dry.
- Use a sitz bath (5-7 cm of warm water) for no longer than 5 minutes if recommended.
- Remove the dressing before bathing, and use a handheld shower head to clean the area.
- Avoid soap, shampoo, and loose hair entering the wound during showering.
- Keep the area free of hair—shave a 5 cm wide strip around the wound at least once a week.



Step-by-Step Dressing Instructions

- Wash your hands thoroughly or use hand sanitizer.
- Carefully remove the old dressing.
- Shower using a handheld sprayer to gently flush the wound and direct soap/hair away.
- Dry the area gently with a clean towel.
- Shave hair around the wound (5 cm wide strip, extending 2.5 cm from all edges).
- Clean the wound with the recommended solution (e.g., saline or prescribed antiseptic).
- Apply wound filler as directed (e.g., gauze, foam, or gel).
- Cover the wound with a dressing that:
 - Matches the contours of the natal cleft (groove between the buttocks).
 - Is sealed at all edges.
 - Prevents contamination and friction.
- Secure the dressing to ensure it stays in place during movement.



Example of a wound dressing contoured to the natal cleft



How to prevent another pilonidal sinus?

- Keeping the area free of hair by regular shaving (at least once a week) or by having laser hair removal
- Avoiding friction to the area
- Avoiding prolonged sitting
- Maintaining ideal body weight
- Showering or bathing at least daily and more often when active



Frequently Asked Questions:

Antibiotics

If prescribed, take them exactly as directed. Do not stop taking them just because you feel better. You need to take the full course of antibiotics.

Pain management

It is normal to experience pain in the wound for the first 7 to 14 days, especially during dressing changes. If the doctor gave you a prescription medicine for pain, take it as prescribed. If you are not taking a prescription pain medicine, take your usual over-the-counter medicine.

How soon you can return to work depends on:

- how quickly you recover
- the type of job you do

When can I resume my normal activities?

Exercise and/or play sports in moderation. If your wound starts to bleed during your exercise, stop and re-start exercise/sports gradually at another time.

How long will my wound take to heal?

The healing process is individual and varies depending on many factors:

- underlying conditions
- your diet
- poor wound hygiene
- improper hair removal
- smoking
- activity
- following the instructions provided.

Is my wound infected?

Changes in the amount of exudate, color and slight odor are not definitive indicators of infection. These can interchange during stages of wound healing and can vary depending on the dressing material used or your daily activity.

Symptoms to Report:

- Severe or worsening pain, unrelieved by pain medications
- New redness/heat/swelling, increased drainage, foul green or pus drainage, increased or new pain, and/or fever (38°C).

OSPIDÉAL SAN SEÁMAS
ST JAMES'S HOSPITAL



Pilonidal Sinus Wound Self-Care Guide

St James's Hospital, Route 2, Dressing Clinic
(Monday to Friday 09:00am - 15:00pm)



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Outside of these hours, please contact your family doctor or attend local Emergency Department.



Scan the code for more details

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