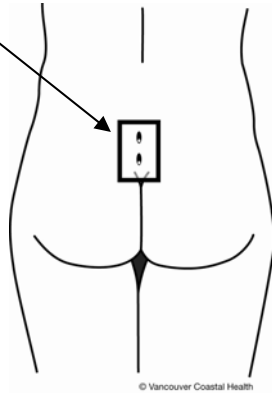


Emergency Services

Pilonidal Abscess

You have a **pilonidal cyst** that has become infected near your tailbone, just above your buttocks. When infected it is called a pilonidal abscess. It usually results from ingrown hairs. ('pilo' means hair, 'nidal' means collection)



We have opened your pilonidal abscess to allow it to drain the pus. The wound has been left open so it can drain and help it to heal. Your abscess is covered with a dressing (bandage). Some people have the wound packed.

- We have packed your wound with special gauze to help draw out the pus and fluid. The wound heals from the inside out.

Your wound can take at least a month to heal fully. As the wound heals, there will be less drainage. In most cases, the infection does not return.

If you have repeated infections of this area, your doctor might suggest you have minor surgery to remove the cyst.

Arrange to see your family doctor in the 7 days.

How to take care of yourself at home

Keep the dressing clean and dry.

Change your dressing (*do what is checked off*):

- Once a day if your wound is packed.
 - Three times a day if your wound is not packed, more often depending on the amount of bleeding and drainage.
 - Change the dressing if it becomes soiled.
- Because of the location of your dressing, you might need someone to do this for you.

Always wash your hands:

- Before and after changing your dressing
- After handling the used dressings

Wrap used dressings in a plastic bag and throw in your garbage.

Bathing (*do what is checked off*):

- Do not bath or shower. Instead, wash yourself as much as possible with a washcloth.
- You can shower.

If we gave you a prescription for antibiotics, make sure you take the medication **exactly** the way the doctor told you to take them. Do not stop taking the antibiotics until you have taken all the pills.

Take acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin) for pain.

Pilonidal Abscess - *continued*

Call your family doctor if:

- You get a fever over 38.5°C (101.3°F).
- You have more swelling or drainage from your wound.
- You start bleeding from the wound.
- Your pain gets worse or does not go away even after taking pain medicine.
- You start to feel sick to your stomach (nauseated) or start throwing up (vomiting).
- You start having liquid bowel movements (diarrhea).

To learn more, it's good to ask:

- Your family doctor
- HealthLinkBC - call 8-1-1 (7-1-1 for deaf and hard of hearing) or go online to www.HealthLinkBC.ca

Ways to prevent pilonidal abscesses

- Once healed, clean the area every day with glycerine soap. Rinse the area well to remove any soap.
- Keep the area clean and dry.
- Try not to sit for long periods of time, especially on hard surfaces.
- Wear cotton underwear and clothing.
- Talk to your doctor about whether hair removal from the area is an option for you.

Adapted from and images used with permission from FB.723.D73 Drainage or Removal of a Pilonidal Sinus (January 2011) by Vancouver Coastal Health.