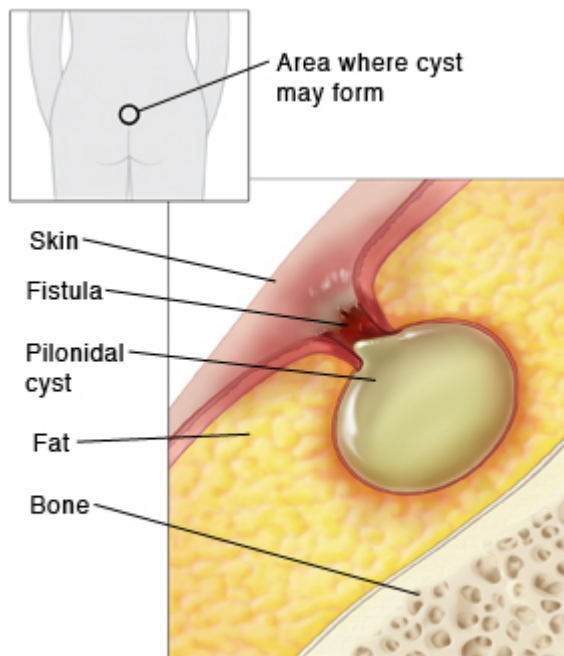


Pilonidal Cyst

A pilonidal cyst is a fluid-filled sac found near the base of the spine (tailbone) or top of the buttocks crease. It may look like a pit or small depression. In some cases, it may have a hollow tunnel (sinus tract) that connects it to the surface of the skin. Normally, a pilonidal cyst doesn't cause symptoms. But if it becomes infected, it can cause pain and swelling.



What causes a pilonidal cyst and who gets them?

The cause of pilonidal cysts has been debated since they were first recognized. Most likely, the cause may be a combination of:

- **Ingrown hairs.** This happens when a hair is forced under the skin or when a hair follicle breaks open (ruptures).
- **Injury to the area.** Injury, rubbing, or skin irritation may cause pilonidal cysts. This can happen from sitting for long periods of time. It can be more common in people who sit or drive a lot for work.

These cysts are often diagnosed in people between ages 16 and 26. But people of any age can have a pilonidal cyst. A person may be born with a cyst but not notice it. These cysts can affect anyone. But they're more common in males, especially those with a large amount of body hair.

Symptoms of a pilonidal cyst infection

A pilonidal cyst may not cause symptoms unless it becomes infected or inflamed. Once a pilonidal cyst becomes infected, it's called a pilonidal abscess. Infection or inflammation from irritation may cause these symptoms:

- Pain, redness, and swelling of the cyst and area around it
- Bad-smelling fluid leaking from the cyst

- Fever

Diagnosing a pilonidal cyst

A pilonidal cyst can be diagnosed by how it looks and by its location. Your healthcare provider will check the suspected cyst to confirm a diagnosis. You'll be told if you need any tests.

Treating a pilonidal cyst infection

Most pilonidal cysts are left alone. But if a cyst becomes infected or inflamed, you need treatment. This may include:

- **Incision and drainage.** If needed, the cyst is cut open, and pus and other infected material is allowed to drain.
- **Antibiotic medicines for the infection.** Know that medicines don't make the cyst go away, and antibiotics have limited use in treating an abscess. They also won't keep a cyst from getting infected again.
- **Hot water soaks.** These can help draw out the infection and ease pain and itching.
- **Surgery to remove the cyst (excision).** This may be done if the infection is severe, doesn't respond to medicine, or keeps coming back. A surgeon cuts and removes the cyst and the tissue around it. Your healthcare provider can tell you more if this is needed.
- **Laser hair removal around the area.** This may decrease the frequency of flare-ups.

Preventing infection

A pilonidal cyst can easily get infected. To help prevent infections:

- Keep the cyst and nearby skin area clean.
- Remove hair from the area of the cyst regularly. Ask your healthcare provider about safe hair removal products or procedures.
- Don't sit in 1 position for long periods of time. This helps to reduce weight and pressure on your tailbone area. Sitting on a special cushion to ease pressure on the tailbone may also help. Ask your healthcare provider where to buy these cushions.
- Don't wear tight-fitting clothes. Looser clothing can help reduce skin irritation around the cyst.