

△ GENERAL INFORMATION

This is a condition in which some surface-type skin (the type that normally faces outward) gets trapped deep under the surface of the skin (Fig. 1). This happens in the area of the *sacrum* (tailbone).

- Do not eat or drink anything for 8 hours before the operation.
- You may be given medicine that will make you feel drowsy before you are brought to the operating room.

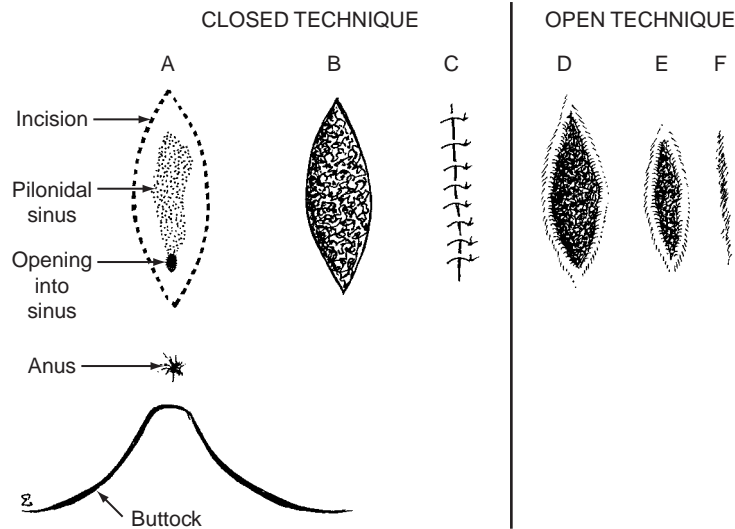


Figure 1. Generally, an infected pilonidal cyst that has developed into an abscess is treated initially by simple drainage to let the pus out and to permit the surrounding tissue to heal. Otherwise, the treatment of a cyst or sinus is the same, namely, excision. A, B, and C show the sequence of excision of the cyst with primary closure. D, E, and F show the healing process following the excision of the cyst when the wound is left open.

COMMON SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- The trapped skin grows hair, and the oil and sweat glands work, but this material has no place to empty. So, it forms what is called a pilonidal *cyst*.
- Most often, there is a small opening in the cyst through which the oil, and even hair, can find their way to the outside. This is a pilonidal *sinus*. Sometimes the cyst becomes infected, and an *abscess* forms.
- Pilonidal cyst and sinus occur most often in hairy young men.

DIAGNOSIS

Usually, the diagnosis can be made by taking a detailed history and doing a thorough physical examination.

○ TREATMENT

An operation is necessary to correct the problem if

- The condition repeatedly flares up and quiets down, but with no expectation that it will go away by itself.
- There is a foul-smelling, oily discharge from the sinus.
- An abscess forms.

After careful consideration of all factors, it is recommended that you have an operation to take care of your pilonidal problem.

PREOPERATIVE PREPARATION

- You will have an examination of your blood and urine. You may also have an examination of your heart (EKG) and lungs (chest x-ray).
- You will be given instructions on how to cleanse your bowel before the operation.

□ OPERATION

- The operation is done either under local anesthesia along with some medicine to continue making you feel drowsy, or with you asleep. This will depend on how badly the area is infected and which one of several possible operations will be performed. This will be discussed with you beforehand.
The operation may be as follows:
- Simply opening the abscess (unroofing it) to let the pus out. This is to take care of an acute problem. The final operation is done at a later time when the infection quiets down.
- Removing all of the involved tissue but leaving the wound open to gradually close by itself over a period of 4 to 8 weeks.
- Removal of the involved tissue (cyst and sinus) with complete closure of the wound.
- The operation usually takes about 1 hour.

POSTOPERATIVE CARE

- You will be taken to a recovery room and observed until your blood pressure, pulse, and breathing are stable and you are completely alert. You should be able to go home that same day with a responsible adult. If the operation is more extensive, you will need to stay in the hospital for a day or two.
- Pain will be controlled with medicine.
- Arrangements will be made for your medicine, follow-up office visit, stitch removal, and instructions on wound care.

⊕ HOME CARE

- You may walk about as you wish, even climb stairs, but don't overdo things.

- Take medicine as prescribed for your pain.
- Be certain to take any antibiotics prescribed for you.
- You will be instructed on taking sitz baths for 15 minutes twice a day if these are necessary. This involves sitting in a bathtub filled with enough warm (not hot) water to completely cover the operated area. It may be possible, and even more desirable, for you to take showers. If you wish, let's discuss this during your follow-up office visit.
- When you may return to work will depend on what operation you had. For example:
 - If the wound is closed completely, stitches will be removed in 10 or 14 days and you should be off work for about 2 weeks for proper healing.
 - If the wound is left open to gradually close by itself, it will drain and require change of dressings for 4 to 8 weeks. At the beginning, someone close

to you can be taught how to do it; it's not difficult. After the first few days you should be able to do it yourself.

- For some types of employment, a person with an open wound is not allowed to work.
- Be careful that you do not become constipated.
- Include enough roughage and plenty of liquids in your diet.
- You may need some help with a mild laxative (example: milk of magnesia).

CALL OUR OFFICE IF

- A closed incision becomes red, swollen, or painful, or if there is drainage from it.
- There is bleeding from a wound that is left open.
- You develop a fever higher than 100°F.
- You have any questions.