



# UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND UNIVERSITY HEALTH CENTER

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## Pilonidal Sinuses and Abscesses

A pilonidal sinus (or cyst) is a tiny sac under the skin at the base of the spine. Their cause is not known; some people appear to be born with them, while others develop them later in life. Hair and other debris may accumulate in them and lead to infection, resulting in a painful bulge in the area.

### PREDISPOSING CONDITIONS

- Family history of pilonidals
- Obesity
- Sedentary life style or job
- Repeated trauma
- Thick body hair

### SYMPTOMS

- Pain, swelling, and redness at base of tailbone
- Large tender area
- Drainage
- Fever

### TREATMENT

If a sinus or cyst is not causing any symptoms, it needs no medical treatment. Once infected, applying a warm compress to the area or soaking in a hot bath tub several times a day may help.

If a painful abscess forms, it may have to be drained to release the puss and infection. This is done by creating a small opening into the abscess, and packing the wound with gauze to allow the area to drain.

After such a procedure, it is IMPORTANT TO USE WARM COMPRESSES TO THE AREA SEVERAL TIMES A DAY to help drainage and to relieve pain.

An antibiotic may be prescribed as well. It is important to complete the course of antibiotics. Follow-up care also includes return visits to ensure healing and complete resolution of the abscess.

If infections are recurrent, a referral to a general surgeon may be needed.

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**Published for the University of Maryland community.**



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