

Laser treatment for pilonidal sinus

We are trialling a new laser treatment for pilonidal sinus. This leaflet includes information about surgical treatments and the new laser procedure.

What is pilonidal sinus?

A pilonidal sinus is a small hole or tunnel at the top of your bottom, between your buttocks. Treatment is usually only needed if it becomes infected. Most people with a pilonidal sinus do not notice it unless it becomes infected and causes symptoms. An infection will cause pain and swelling at the top of the cleft in your buttocks, and a pus-filled skin abscess can develop, causing pain and swelling and making it difficult to sit down.

A pilonidal sinus often forms because hairs curl over and grow into your skin. This can cause an infection. You can also get a pilonidal sinus because of long-term swelling (inflammation) and infection of the skin.

Treatment for an infected pilonidal sinus

Treatment depends on your symptoms, the size of the sinus, if it is the first time you have had an infected pilonidal sinus or it keeps coming back. If it is painful and swollen it usually needs to be cut and the pus drained, and you may also need antibiotics.

Surgical treatments for pilonidal sinus

Antibiotics and ointments can be prescribed but often do not work and so the standard treatment is surgery to remove the sinus and surrounding tissue to try to prevent it coming back. As pilonidal sinus is formed between the buttocks it can be difficult for them to heal, and in about 20% of cases, the problem can come back within 3 years. Surgical treatments include:

- Minor operation to drain the pus from the abscess. A small cut (hole) is made in the abscess so the pus can be drained.
- Surgery to remove sinus and wound left open. The sinus is cut out, some surrounding skin removed and the wound is left open to heal naturally.
- Surgery to remove sinus and the wound closed. The sinus is removed and the wound is closed creating skin flap from the surrounding areas.

You can find more detailed information about pilonidal sinus and these surgical treatments on the NHS website: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pilonidal-sinus/>

Laser treatment

This is a new procedure that we are trialling which is minimally invasive so only involves a small incision under general anaesthesia (where you're asleep).

A laser is used to take away the pilonidal sinus without damaging or removing the surrounding tissue. The whole treatment takes around 30 minutes.

The treatment is carried out by inserting a very small flexible laser probe into the sinus/abscess and once it is in the correct position, the laser destroys the infected tissue allowing the tunnel to collapse and close while the probe is slowly pulled out.

The treatment is less painful than other surgical methods with a lower risk of complications and a shorter recovery time.

Patients can usually go home the same day as the treatment. The surgical team will advise you about pain relief and when you can return to your normal everyday activities.

The procedure has a high success rate (87.5%). However, there is still a risk of the problem coming back such as another abscess or haematoma. Your consultant will discuss risk factors with you before going ahead with treatment.

What if I have concerns or questions?

If you have any concerns after your treatment, please call the General Surgery Department. Please see contact details below.

Trial information

Please note that at the moment we are trialling this procedure at Lister Hospital. During the trial period all patient outcomes will be subject to audit and monitored by our clinical effectiveness committee.

Further information

- **NHS Website** <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pilonidal-sinus/>

Useful contact details

East and North Hertfordshire Teaching NHS Trust:

- Website www.enherts-tr.nhs.uk
- Telephone 01438 314333

General Surgery Department:

- Telephone 01438 284331 (Monday to Friday, 8am – 5pm)

If you are calling out of hours and reach our voicemail service, please clearly state your full name, date of birth, hospital number, NHS number and telephone number and we will return your call the next working day.

NHS 111:

This phoneline can help if you think you need medical help right now. NHS 111 can direct you to the best place to get help if you cannot contact your GP during the day, or when your GP is closed (out-of-hours). It is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

- Telephone 111

Leaflet information

You can request this information in a different format or another language; please speak to your doctor or nurse.

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