



## PATIENT AND FAMILY INFORMATION SHEET

### *Pilonidal Disease*

#### **What is pilonidal disease?**

- It is a condition that is caused when hair or skin debris become lodged in a small opening or “pit” in the area near the tailbone. Pilonidal is Latin for “nest of hair.”
- The area becomes inflamed and tracts are created that can cause a “sinus.”
- Bacteria can then enter the tract causing an infection or abscess.

#### **How do I know if my child has pilonidal disease?**

*Here are some of the symptoms your child may have:*

- Pain at the tailbone
- Swelling
- Redness
- Drainage of pus or blood
- Fever

#### **How is pilonidal disease treated?**

Most cases of pilonidal disease can be managed without surgery.

##### *Initial Treatment:*

- If an infection is present, the area may need to be opened surgically to drain the pus.
  - This may be done under local anesthesia, sedation, or general anesthesia.
- Your child may also need to take antibiotics.
- Have your child soak in a warm bathtub or rinse the area well in a shower 1-2 times per day.

##### *Ongoing treatment and prevention*

##### **Hair must be removed from tailbone area:**

- Shave a 2 inch border around the area with an electric razor or beard trimmer.
- Pluck any hair that is left with tweezers.
- You may use hair removal products (e.g. Nair™, Veet™).
- Consider Laser hair removal if very hairy.
- Make sure to check the area often.

##### *How to prevent flare ups*

- Close attention to personal hygiene with daily baths/showers.
- Continue frequent hair removal.
- Wear loose fitting clothing, cotton underwear.
- Remove damp clothing promptly.
  - especially after gym, sports or swimming.
- Limit activities that cause impact to the tail bone.
- Do not smoke.
- Keep weight in the normal range.

**Note: This preventive care may be needed up to 2 years.**



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### What if surgery is needed?

#### *What happens before surgery?*

There are different procedures that may be recommended:

- Opening the area to drain the pus.
- Removing the “pits”.
- Removing infected tissue from the area and then closing it with stitches or leaving it open to heal from the inside out.
- Flap procedures for cases that do not respond to the treatments above.

#### *What happens during surgery?*

- Your child will be taken to the operating room and given anesthesia.
- The skin over the tailbone area will be opened surgically, all pits removed and cleaned out.
- The area may be closed or left open to heal from the inside out.
  - This depends on the amount of infection present.

#### *What happens after surgery?*

- There may be a short stay in the hospital before going home.
- Your child will be given medicines for pain.
- Your child may continue to receive antibiotics.

### What will I need to do when we get home after surgery?

*Your surgeon will give you specific instructions on how to care for the wound.*

*Below are some general instructions.*

#### *If your child has an open wound:*

- Packing material (gauze or other) will be placed into the wound.
- Give the pain medication the child has been ordered 30-60 minutes prior to dressing changes.
- You may be instructed to remove packing in the shower or bath after getting it wet.
- You may be instructed to replace the packing in the wound bed. Your surgical team will guide you how to specifically care for the wound.
- In some cases, a wound VAC may be applied
  - These devices are used for Negative Pressure Wound Treatment. They promote wound healing by applying a vacuum through a special sealed dressing. The continued vacuum draws out fluid from the wound and increases blood flow to the area which helps with healing.
- You will have frequent appointments with your surgical team to check wound healing.

#### *If your child has a closed wound:*

- After the infection is cleaned out, the wound will be closed.
- Stitches can be placed under the skin or on the outside of the skin/wound.
  - If on the outside, they will often be removed in 7 – 10 days.



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### How do I care for my child at home?

- Prevention of recurrence is the best way to care for your child at home.
  - Up to half of all children with pilonidal disease will have it occur again.
- Aggressive hair removal.
- Watching the area for redness or swelling.
- Reporting symptoms right away-any new pain or drainage needs attention.

#### *Bathing:*

- Follow the instructions given by your surgical care team.
- If outside stitches are in place, you will be told when it is okay to take a shower or bath.

#### *Activity:*

- Do not sit or lie on the wound for more than 30 minutes at a time, even if it doesn't hurt. Pressure on the wound may delay healing. Encourage your child to sit, watch TV, do homework, and sleep on his/her stomach or side.

#### *Medicines:*

- If antibiotics were prescribed, take them until they are all gone.
- Follow the plan for pain medicines as discussed.
- Some children may experience constipation from medicines or fear of passing stools after surgery. Let us know if this occurs.

#### *Diet:*

- Your child may resume a regular diet.
- Keep in mind that it will be helpful to increase fluids by mouth (water, sports drinks, juice) and add fiber to their diet (fruits, vegetables, high fiber cereals) and protein (beans, meats, eggs, protein enriched shakes) to help the area heal.

### When should I call the office?

*If your child experiences any of the following, please call our office:*

- Increased pain
- Swelling or redness near the tailbone
- Drainage from the area
- Fever over 101.5°F (38.6°C)
- Vomiting

*Your child will need to follow up with the surgeon.*

*You will receive specific instructions for follow up when your child is discharged.*

Please don't hesitate to call our office if you have any problems or concerns.

Surgical provider: \_\_\_\_\_

Office Number: \_\_\_\_\_

After hours number, if applicable: \_\_\_\_\_

*Thank you for allowing us to care for your child.*