

Sacral Dimple (Pilonidal Dimple)

A sacral dimple is a small indentation at the base of your child's spine (the sacrum). Sacral dimples are relatively common in newborn babies and are usually not of major concern. Less often, they are a sign of a birth defect involving the spinal cord; in most cases, the defect is a minor one. Some sacral dimples have appearances that may raise concern about a possible birth defect.

What is a sacral dimple?

A sacral dimple is a small dimple or cleft in the skin at the base of your baby's spinal cord (the small of the back, also called the "sacrum"). Especially if it is small or shallow, the dimple is harmless.

The doctor will pay attention to sacral dimples because they are sometimes a sign of birth defects involving the spinal cord or spinal bones (vertebrae). The most common of these is called "spina bifida occulta." This is a small defect of one of the vertebrae, and usually causes no problems. More serious birth defects are possible but rare.

What does it look like?

- A small dimple or pit in your child's lower back. Usually the dimple is very shallow; you can see to the bottom with no problem.
- Usually located in the crease between the buttocks.
- Certain appearances may trigger concern about accompanying birth defects, including:
 - Swelling in the area.
 - Skin tags (little pieces of "extra" skin).
 - A birthmark (nevus) in the area.
 - Sometimes a patch of hair may be present. This is often normal, especially in babies of certain racial/ethnic groups.

What causes sacral dimples?

- Most sacral dimples are minor abnormalities that occur while your baby is growing in the womb.
- Rarely, they are a sign of a deeper spinal abnormality.

What are some possible complications of sacral dimples?

- Minor, shallow sacral dimples have no complications. They are a normal variation.
- Deeper pits or sinuses can become infected, usually when the child is much older. If this happens, an abscess (infection underneath the skin) or cyst (sac of tissue under the skin) may develop. These infections may not occur until the teen years.

What increases your child's risk of sacral dimples?

- There are no known risk factors for minor sacral dimples. Some type of abnormality in the sacral region is found in about 3% of normal babies.
- Certain factors increase the risk of spinal abnormalities (for example, not enough folic acid during pregnancy or diabetes in the mother).

What tests or treatments are needed for sacral dimples?

Testing. Further testing is needed only when sacral dimples have certain characteristics previously mentioned (large, deep, unusual appearance or location).

- Shallow sacral dimples with no related abnormalities usually don't require any testing.
- When needed, ultrasound is usually the first test performed. This is a simple, painless test that can help determine if your child has any deeper abnormality associated with the spinal dimple.
- Ultrasound is usually done in the first 3 or 4 months after birth.
- If testing shows any birth defect related to sacral dimple, your child will undergo further evaluation for diagnosis and treatment.

When should I call your office?

Call our office if there is any change in the appearance of the sacral dimple, such as:

- Signs of infection (redness or tenderness).
- Fluid draining from the dimple.