

# Incision & Drainage (I&D)

(Treatment for painful boils, abscesses, and infected cysts)

## What Is Incision & Drainage (I&D)?

Incision and Drainage (I&D) is a minor in-office procedure used to treat:

- Abscesses
- Boils (furuncles)
- Carbuncles
- Infected cysts
- Localized collections of pus under the skin

When pus becomes trapped beneath the skin, antibiotics alone may not fully resolve the infection. I&D allows the infection to drain so the area can heal properly.



## What Does an Abscess Look Like?

Common signs include:

- Painful swollen bump
- Redness and warmth
- Tenderness
- Pus or drainage
- Pressure or throbbing sensation

Some abscesses may also cause fever or fatigue.

## What Causes Abscesses or Boils?

Most are caused by bacteria entering the skin through:

- Hair follicles
- Small cuts or irritation
- Ingrown hairs
- Blocked oil glands

Some infections are related to **staph bacteria**, including Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (**MRSA**) infection.

## What Happens During an I&D Procedure?

Incision & drainage is usually performed in the office under local anesthesia.

During the procedure:

1. The skin is cleaned
2. Numbing medicine is injected
3. A small opening is made in the abscess
4. Pus and infected material are drained
5. The area may be rinsed or packed with gauze
6. A dressing is applied

The procedure is typically quick and helps relieve pressure and pain.

## Will I Need Antibiotics?

Sometimes.

Your dermatologist will decide based on:

- Size of infection
- Location
- Surrounding redness
- Fever or systemic symptoms
- Risk factors for MRSA

Some abscesses heal well after drainage alone.

# How Long Does Healing Take?

Healing depends on:

- Size of the abscess
- Location
- Underlying health conditions

Many smaller areas improve within **1–2 weeks**.

## Pre-Op Instructions (Before I&D)

### Before your visit

- Eat normally unless instructed otherwise
- Tell us if you:
  - Take blood thinners
  - Have diabetes
  - Have immune system problems
  - Have allergies to medications or anesthetics

### Do NOT

- Squeeze or aggressively pop the abscess at home
- Apply irritating chemicals or harsh products

## Post-Op Instructions (After I&D)

### What's normal

- Mild soreness
- Continued drainage for 1–2 days
- Mild swelling or tenderness

### Aftercare

- Keep the area clean and covered
- Change dressings as directed
- Wash hands before and after touching the area
- Complete prescribed antibiotics if given
- Avoid squeezing or picking

### Packing

Some wounds are loosely packed with gauze and may require:

- Dressing changes
- Follow-up visits
- Packing removal

#### **Call the office if**

- Redness spreads
- Fever develops
- Pain worsens significantly
- Drainage becomes excessive
- You develop increasing swelling or warmth

## **Incision & Drainage FAQ**

### **Will the procedure hurt?**

Local anesthetic is used to numb the area. You may feel pressure, but discomfort is usually manageable.

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### **Why can't antibiotics alone fix an abscess?**

Pus trapped under the skin often needs to be physically drained for proper healing.

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### **Can the infection come back?**

Yes. Some patients are prone to recurrent boils or cyst infections.

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### **Will I have a scar?**

A small scar is possible, especially with larger or deeper abscesses.

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### **What is MRSA?**

MRSA is a type of staph bacteria resistant to some antibiotics. It can still often be treated successfully with proper care.

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### **Can I drain it myself at home?**

No. Attempting to drain an abscess at home can worsen infection or spread bacteria deeper.

## **When should I seek urgent medical attention?**

Seek prompt care if you have:

- Rapidly spreading redness
- Fever
- Severe pain
- Infection near the eye
- Difficulty moving the area
- Signs of systemic illness