

Setons

Definition:

A seton is a ribbon of material that is placed in a fistula to aid in healing. Thread, wire, rubber, or medicated suture can be used as a seton.

How is it placed?

A seton can sometimes be placed by a physician in clinic. On other occasions, it may be placed in an operating room, in combination with an examination under anesthesia.

How does it work?

A seton is meant to drain the fistula tract in order to prevent bacteria from collecting (for example, in an abscess) and eroding more deeply into the patient's tissues. With drainage, the infection will pass allowing operation at the site of origin. Formerly, they were also used to cut the fistula tract and/or induce scarring.

What do I do?

You will not have to do anything with your seton except follow good hygiene guidelines, including daily Sitz baths and washing after bowel movements. You will be given more specific instructions concerning your seton after it is placed. Of course, you should always make and keep appointments with your surgeon to ensure that the seton is in place and the infection is clearing.

Will it travel up into my body?

No. All setons that are inserted are sutured, or stitched, to the tissue or otherwise secured. You should not worry about the seton moving up into your body.

Skin Care

We expect some leakage and drainage around the fistula. Try to keep the area as dry as possible. Wearing and changing a pad frequently can assist with keeping the skin dry. Leaving the area open to air can also help. After washing with water, be sure to dry the area thoroughly but gently. A moisture barrier such as zinc oxide (found in ointments such as Desitin) can be placed on completely dry skin to help with skin protection.

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