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# Tarlov Cysts

National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS)

## Source

*National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS). [Tarlov Cysts Information Page](#).*

Tarlov cysts are sacs filled with cerebrospinal fluid that most often affect nerve roots in the sacrum, the group of bones at the base of the spine. These cysts (also known as meningeal or perineural cysts) can compress nerve roots, causing lower back pain, sciatica (shock-like or burning pain in the lower back, buttocks, and down one leg to below the knee), urinary incontinence, headaches (due to changes in cerebrospinal fluid pressure), constipation, sexual dysfunction, and some loss of feeling or control of movement in the leg and/or foot. Pressure on the nerves next to the cysts can also cause pain and deterioration of surrounding bone. Tarlov cysts can be diagnosed using magnetic resonance imaging (MRI); however, it is estimated that the majority of the cysts observed by MRI cause no symptoms. Tarlov cysts may become symptomatic following shock, trauma, or exertion that causes the buildup of cerebrospinal fluid. Women are at much higher risk of developing these cysts than are men.