Advice following a Vulval Biopsy

Obstetrics & Gynaecology
Women & Children’s Services

This leaflet has been designed to give you important information about your condition / procedure, and to answer some common queries that you may have.
What is a Vulval Biopsy?

A vulval biopsy is a surgical procedure in which a small piece of tissue is removed from the vulval area.

You have a problem in the vulval area. This may be pain or itching, an ulcer or lump, or blisters or a rash. Sometimes it is not possible to know exactly what is wrong with the skin just from looking or by taking other tests such as blood tests or swabs. If this is the case, then a biopsy can often give very useful information that can help to make a diagnosis or to suggest suitable treatment.

A biopsy makes a hole in the skin that usually has to be closed with one or more stitches. The stitches may need to be removed after 5-10 days or the type of stitch used may dissolve and fall out by themselves.

The anaesthetic usually wears off after about half an hour. The biopsy site will feel a little sore. You may feel more comfortable if you take a pain killer such as paracetamol or ibuprofen (if you are not allergic to it). We would advise that you avoid heavy work or prolonged standing for the rest of the day after a vulval biopsy.

You can wash the vulval skin with plain water after you pass water; you will find that soothing. Otherwise, you can just wipe the skin gently with paper as normal.

When you have the bowels open, make sure that you wipe the skin in a direction away from the vulva, to keep the biopsy site as clean as possible. Again, if you rinse the skin fully after going to the toilet, that will help to keep the wound as clean as possible.

Please continue to wash the vulval skin every day as normal. It is best to wash the skin with water alone. This is easiest in a shower, but if you take a bath, make it a quick but thorough rinse and avoid soaking in the bath for the first two to three days after the biopsy to allow the wound to dry out.

After washing, it is important that you dry the area thoroughly. This can be done by gently dabbing the area (do not rub) or by using a hairdryer set on ‘cool’.

When can I get back to normal after the biopsy?

It will take a few days for the skin to heal up and you will probably find the area is tender.

It may sting when you pass water, and you may find that loose clothes are more comfortable for a couple of days.

Vigorous exercise such as running, cycling, horse riding etc should be avoided for a few days after the biopsy as the area is likely to be uncomfortable and the biopsy site will be fragile.

You can resume sexual intercourse after three or four weeks if the area is fully comfortable.

If you are a regular swimmer, you can start swimming again after the stitches have been removed or dissolved or after the biopsy site has healed fully.

What are the risks of having a Vulval Biopsy?

There are some small risks from a procedure like a vulval biopsy.

The biopsy may leave a small scar on the skin.

There will be some bleeding at the time of the biopsy, but the operator will aim to stop this before you leave the couch.
Occasionally, the bleeding starts up again later on in the day. If this happens, you should press on the skin with a piece of cotton wool or towel for 15 minutes whilst resting lying down. If the bleeding does not stop then, you should contact the clinic or the accident and emergency unit at the local hospital.

The small wound in the skin can allow infection to get into the body. If this happens, the site of the biopsy will feel more uncomfortable and hot as the days go by and may start to ooze. If this happens, you should contact your doctor as you may need antibiotic treatment.

When will I get the result?
The result of the testing of the piece of vulval skin usually comes through after two to three weeks. Your doctor or nurse will arrange to contact you or see you again when the result is through and to talk about any treatment that might be advised. If you have not heard anything by six weeks after the biopsy, please contact the clinic in case we have had difficulty in contacting you.

Telephone Contacts
Colposcopy Secretary:
Grimsby: 01472 874111 ext. 1195
Scunthorpe / Goole: 01724 290150
Nurse Colposcopist: 01472 874111 ext. 2820 or 07850299418

Concerns and Queries
If you have any concerns / queries about any of the services offered by the Trust, in the first instance, please speak to the person providing your care.

For Diana, Princess of Wales Hospital
Alternatively you can contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on (01472) 875403 or at the PALS office which is situated near the main entrance.

For Scunthorpe General Hospital
Alternatively you can contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on (01724) 290132 or at the PALS office which situated on C Floor.
Alternatively you can email: nlg-tr.PALS@nhs.net

Confidentiality
Information on NHS patients is collected in a variety of ways and for a variety of reasons (e.g. providing care and treatment, managing and planning the NHS, training and educating staff, research etc.).

Everyone working for the NHS has a legal duty to keep information about you confidential. Information will only ever be shared with people who have a genuine need for it (e.g. your GP or other professionals from whom you have been receiving care) or if the law requires it, for example, to notify a birth.

Please be assured however that anyone who receives information from us is also under a legal duty to keep it confidential.

Zero Tolerance - Violent, Threatening and Abusive Behaviour
The Trust and its staff are committed to providing high quality care to patients within the department. However, we wish to advise all patients / visitors that the following inappropriate behaviour will not be tolerated:
- Swearing
Information for patients and visitors

- Threatening / abusive behaviour
- Verbal / physical abuse

The Trust reserves the right to withdraw from treating patients whom are threatening / abusive / violent and ensuring the removal of those persons from the premises.

All acts of criminal violence and aggression will be notified to the Police immediately.

Risk Management Strategy

The Trust welcomes comments and suggestions from patients and visitors that could help to reduce risk.

Perhaps you have experienced something whilst in hospital, whilst attending as an outpatient or as a visitor and you felt at risk.

Please tell a member of staff on the ward or in the department you are attending / visiting.

Moving & Handling

The Trust operates a Minimal Lifting Policy, which in essence means patients are only ever lifted by nursing staff in an emergency situation.

Patients are always encouraged to help themselves as much as possible when mobilising, and if unable to do so, equipment may be used to assist in their safe transfer.

If you have any questions regarding moving and handling of patients within the Trust, please speak to a member of staff in the ward or department you are visiting.

Northern Lincolnshire and Goole NHS Foundation Trust

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Grimsby
01472 874111

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