

# 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 you may have.**

## Information for patients and visitors

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### 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.

If 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.

The biopsy is performed in the minor operations clinic on ward B1 at Diana, Princess of Wales Hospital) or Gynaecology Out-patients, B Floor at Scunthorpe General Hospital.

You do not need to do anything special in preparation for the test and you do not need to bring anything with you. It is also perfectly fine to go ahead with the biopsy if you are having a period on the day of the test.

A biopsy makes a hole in the skin that usually has to be closed with one or more stitches. The stitches used are dissolvable and fall out by themselves.

A local anaesthetic is used for the procedure and this 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. It is safe to drive after the procedure.

You can wash the vulval skin with plain water after you pass urine; 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 urine, and you may find that loose clothes are more comfortable for a couple of days.



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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 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 clinician 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: 03033 303048

Scunthorpe / Goole: 030333 302666

Nurse Colposcopist: Lynda Farrow-Browne (Answer machine) 03033 303590



## Information for patients and visitors

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### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service offers confidential advice, support and information on any health related matters.

If you have a comment, concern, complaint or compliment about the care or service you have received from the Trust you can contact the PALS team as follows:

Telephone: 03033 306518

Email: [nlg-tr.PALS@nhs.net](mailto:nlg-tr.PALS@nhs.net)

There are also offices at both the Diana Princess of Wales Hospital (near the main entrance) and Scunthorpe General Hospital (on the C Floor, near the outpatient department), should you wish to visit.

**Please note: PALS should not be contacted for clinical advice relating to the content of this leaflet. The service should be contacted directly in the first instance.**

### Northern Lincolnshire and Goole NHS Foundation Trust

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