

Vulval Biopsy

Vulval biopsy

This is the removal of a small piece of skin from the vulva to diagnose your condition and help us plan the best treatment for you.

A biopsy can help establish a definite diagnosis. We will recommend this if we are uncertain about your diagnosis, when we are concerned that there may be cancerous or pre-cancerous change, or when the treatment you have been on for your skin has not been effective.

Procedure

The area will be cleaned and a local anaesthetic will be injected which may be uncomfortable and will possibly sting but makes the area numb very quickly.

The small piece of skin is removed and sent to the laboratory and the doctor or nurse will either apply a paste or use a stitch to seal the area and help it to heal. The doctor or nurse will arrange to give you the results either by letter or telephone, or at a follow-up appointment.

The appointment should take about 30 minutes.

Sometimes it is recommended that the biopsy be performed under a general anaesthetic. This allows us to remove the abnormal area of skin completely or take a number of small biopsies from different areas.

It can take up to four weeks for us to receive your biopsy results.

Following your biopsy

You will be able to go home immediately after the biopsy. Take things easy on the day and you may resume normal activities as you feel able.

The wound

The area may be red and tender for a few days. You may have a small stitch in the biopsy site which will dissolve. Stitches can take up to 10-20 days to dissolve. If a sealing paste has been used this can leave a black discharge for up to a week.

Some bleeding/spotting may occur for a few days; use sanitary towels during this time, not tampons, to reduce the risk of infection.

Pain relief

You can expect mild discomfort and a 'stinging' sensation at the operation site; this may start 2-4 hours after your procedure when the local anaesthetic wears off. Use your preferred pain killer.

Hygiene

It is essential to keep the area clean. You may bathe the day after avoiding foam bath, soap and talcum powder as this could irritate your skin. Gently pat the skin dry after washing. Avoid wearing tights/jeans.

Sexual Intercourse

It is advisable to avoid sexual intercourse until the area has healed and is no longer sore - this will range from a few days to a couple of weeks.

Risks of the operation

It may not be possible to make a diagnosis from the biopsy sample, and therefore a repeat biopsy can sometimes be needed.

It is possible to develop an infection at the biopsy site. If you experience any swelling, increased pain, redness or the area feels hot, this may be a reaction to the local anaesthetic or a mild infection, in which case you should inform the Centre for Women's Health (contact details below) or your GP.

Contact us

- Colposcopy Clinic **01392 406580**
- Wynard Ward **01392 406512**
- or your GP

The Trust cannot accept any responsibility for the accuracy of the information given if the leaflet is not used by RD&E staff undertaking procedures at the RD&E hospitals.

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