

Bartholin's Cyst or Abscess

Gynaecology

Introduction

This leaflet has been designed for women who may have a Bartholin's cyst or abscess. The aim of this leaflet is to provide information about this condition.

What is a Bartholin's cyst or abscess?

The Bartholin's gland is a tiny organ situated on each of the labia (vaginal lips), near the opening of the vagina. If the vagina were the face of a clock, these glands would be found at about 4 and 8 o'clock. Normally, they are invisible. They secrete a small amount of fluid to lubricate the vaginal lips. A Bartholin's cyst is where a flap of skin grows over the opening of one of the glands and the fluid backs up. This causes a round swelling which can grow from the size of a penny to larger than an orange, although most do not get bigger than a golf ball. You have been advised by the doctor that you have either a Bartholin's abscess or a Bartholin's cyst which requires treatment.

What is the treatment?

The cyst may require removal under a general anaesthetic (put to sleep). The doctor may decide that "marsupialisation" of the cyst is required. This involves cutting the gland and folding the inner edge of the incision back and stitching it in place. This forms a small pouch which drains easily. Sutures that will be absorbed by the body are used.

What are the benefits to this procedure?

The main aim of the surgery is to drain any fluid or pus. This relieves symptoms, but also another aim is to minimise the chance of the problem reoccurring by carrying out a marsupialisation as described in the treatment section.

What are the alternatives?

Antibiotics may be prescribed and will sometimes cure a small abscess. Soaking in warm water 2-3 times daily for several days usually provides some relief.

This may cause the abscess to open and drain on its own. However, this does not always solve the problem because the size of the rupture is often small and closes quickly, before the drainage is complete.

The prevention of infection is a major priority in all healthcare and everyone has a part to play.

- Please decontaminate your hands frequently for 20 seconds using soap and water or alcohol gel if available
- If you have symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting, cough or other respiratory symptoms, a temperature or any loss of taste or smell please do not visit the hospital or any other care facility and seek advice from 111
- Keep the environment clean and tidy
- Let's work together to keep infections out of our hospitals and care homes.

Another alternative treatment for Bartholin's abscess involves putting local anaesthetic over the area of the enlarged gland to numb it so it is not painful. A small cut is made in the inner portion of the vagina. This allows the fluid or abscess to be drained out. The doctor may flush the cavity with some sterile fluid.

Thereafter, a word catheter - a small rubber tube - is put in through the opening that has been created. The plastic tubing has a little balloon at the tip and this is filled with about 3mls of sterile fluid. The balloon helps to keep the tube in place. The lower end of the tube is tucked into the vagina. The tube is left in place for a few weeks. (A separate leaflet is available for this procedure)

What are the risks and complications?

As with every operation, there is a small risk of complications occurring. This may include the possibility of:

- Infection
- Haemorrhage

It is unlikely that any of the above will occur, but we would like to inform you of the possibilities.

There is a possibility that if you have had one cyst or abscess you may be unlucky enough to have it recur. There is a possibility that you may need to have the gland removed. The choice about which treatment is best for you will be made together with your doctor. This will be based on the risks and benefits of the treatment and your individual circumstances.

What happens about consent?

We must seek your consent for any procedure or treatment beforehand. Your doctor will explain the risks, benefits and alternatives where relevant before they ask for your consent. If you are unsure about any aspect of the procedure or treatment proposed, please do not hesitate to ask for more information.

What happens on the day of my operation?

You must have nothing to eat or drink for a specified time prior to your surgery. You will be advised what time you need to starve from on your admission information. A doctor will see you to take a blood sample and to obtain your written consent for the operation. (This may already have been done in clinic.)

It is important to have a bath or shower on the day of your operation before you come into the hospital. Please ensure that any nail polish is removed from finger and toe nails and any false nails removed. After your shower or bath do not apply any body cream, make up or deodorant to your skin. All jewellery must be removed other than a wedding ring. This can be left on and taped over prior to your surgery. You will be asked to change into a theatre gown and a member of the team will escort you to the theatre.

Once you are in the small room just outside the operating theatre, you will be given the anaesthetic. This is usually started by an injection in the back of your hand. You may also have a mask placed on your face. You will not remember anything else until the nurse comes to escort you back to your bed.

What happens after the operation?

When you wake up from the anaesthetic you may have some soreness. Painkillers can be given, if necessary. You may have a small piece of gauze packed into where your incisions (cuts) were performed. If this is the case you may need to stay in overnight and have the packing removed by the nurses the following morning. If there is no pack required you may be able to go home within a few hours of the procedure.

What happens on discharge?

It is advisable that you are escorted home by car or taxi and that someone stays with you the first night after the anaesthetic. You should avoid driving a car, riding a bike, operating machinery, smoking, drinking alcohol or signing important documents for 24 hours after your operation. Avoid vigorous exercise for 4 weeks post-surgery.

Will I get any pain?

Some discomfort is to be expected. It may continue for a few days. You may take paracetamol tablets every 4-6 hours up to a maximum of eight tablets in 24 hours. Take warm baths several times a day to relieve discomfort.

When can I have sex again?

It is safe to resume sexual intercourse as soon as the area has healed.

Will I get any vaginal discharge?

You may have a discharge for up to four weeks and it is advisable to wear a panty liner. You should try to wear cotton panties and avoid panties made from nylon, polyester, silk or other non-ventilating materials. Do not wear tight clothing such as jeans.

When can I return to work?

It is advisable to refrain from work for at least 48 hours or until you feel comfortable enough to return.

Will I need any follow-up?

You will not normally be given a follow-up appointment for the hospital unless this is a recurrent problem. You may well be given a copy of the letter which will be sent to your GP on discharge.

Finally

If you are worried about anything at home regarding your operation you may telephone your GP or contact the Gynaecology Ward on 01902 694034.

Where can I get further information?

Further information can be found at:

www.nhs.uk/conditions/bartholins-cyst.

English

If you need information in another way like easy read or a different language please let us know.

If you need an interpreter or assistance please let us know.

Lithuanian

Jeigu norėtumėte, kad informacija jums būtų pateikta kitu būdu, pavyzdžiui, supaprastinta forma ar kita kalba, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Jeigu jums reikia vertėjo ar kitos pagalbos, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Polish

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać te informacje w innej postaci, na przykład w wersji łatwej do czytania lub w innym języku, prosimy powiedzieć nam o tym.

Prosimy poinformować nas również, jeżeli potrzebowaliby Państwo usługi tłumaczenia ustnego lub innej pomocy.

Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਵਿਚ ਆਸਾਨ ਰੂਪ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੂਜੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ, ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਦੁਭਾਸ਼ੀਏ ਦੀ ਜਾਂ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

Romanian

Dacă aveți nevoie de informații în alt format, ca de exemplu caractere ușor de citit sau altă limbă, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Dacă aveți nevoie de un interpret sau de asistență, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Traditional Chinese

如果您需要以其他方式了解信息，如易读或其他语种，请告诉我们。

如果您需要口译人员或帮助，请告诉我们。