

Information for Patients

Vulval Excision

The vulva is the term used for the visible part of the female genitalia. A vulval excision involves removing a small piece of skin from this area. This may be recommended if there is a bothersome area such as a skin tag or mole that is troubling you, but is sometimes recommended to treat abnormal cells in the skin.

The excision aims to remove the area that is causing problems. If abnormal cells have been removed from the skin then you will usually be advised to attend the clinic some time afterwards to monitor the health of your vulva. It is important that you come back for any appointments that have been arranged.

What to expect on the day of treatment

General Anaesthetic

If you are having a general anaesthetic, you will attend the hospital for a pre-operative assessment beforehand. The surgery is then usually performed as a day case. The doctor who is treating you will advise you when your treatment will take place.

Local Anaesthetic

If you are having a local anaesthetic, you will attend the clinic. The excision usually takes 15-20 minutes, but you should allow approximately half an hour for the whole visit. You are welcome to bring a friend, partner or relative with you and they can stay with you throughout the procedure if you wish.

You will be asked to undress from the waist down in a private cubicle. If the treatment is performed under local anaesthetic this will be administered at the start of the procedure. This can be uncomfortable for a very short time, but will numb the area quickly for the treatment.

Once the area of skin has been removed you will have dissolvable stitches put in to close the skin. You will be given a dressing to cover your vulva and this can be removed after a couple of hours.

The stitches should dissolve on their own after about 2 - 3 weeks. If you still notice them after this time, please see your Practice Nurse at your GP surgery who can remove them if necessary.

What to expect after your treatment

Your recovery period will be the same, regardless of whether you had your treatment under local or general anaesthetic.

Whilst you are healing, it is common to have some pain and swelling at the place where the excision was done. The pain usually does not last longer than 2 weeks. You may find it useful to take pain relief and anti-inflammatory tablets, such as Ibuprofen or Paracetamol, during this time. You do not need a prescription to buy these medicines. It is important to take them as directed by your pharmacist.

How should I take care of myself after vulval excision?

To avoid infection whilst you are healing, wash your hands with soap and water before and after you touch your vulva.

Wash your vulva gently each day during your bath or shower, do not use any perfumed products which may irritate the skin.

Gently pat the area dry with a clean towel. Do not have sex until the area heals. This could take a few weeks. You will be most comfortable in cotton underwear and loose-fitting clothes after this kind of surgery.

When to seek advice if you experience any of the following?

- Offensive smelling discharge or heavy bleeding.
- If you feel unwell with a fever.
- If your pain is not controlled with over the counter pain relief.
- If your vulva is not healing after 4 weeks.

Contact Numbers:

- 📞 Colposcopy Department Secretary: (0161) 701 6922 available Monday to Friday 08:30 - 15:00
- 📞 Nurse Colposcopists (0161) 276 5485 available Monday to Friday 08:00 - 17:00
- 📞 Emergency Gynaecology Unit located at Wythenshawe Hospital (0161) 291 2561 available 24/7