

# Advice following a Vulval Biopsy

This information leaflet is designed to give you information about how to look after yourself after having a vulval biopsy. If you have any questions or concerns after reading the leaflet, please contact the gynaecology/ colposcopy specialist nurses (telephone number is below).

## **What is the Vulva?**

The vulva is the outer part of the female genitals. It is made up of the entrance to the vagina, the labia (vaginal lips), the clitoris and the surrounding skin.

## **Why do I need a Vulval Biopsy?**

You have a problem in the vulval area. This may be pain, itching, blisters, lump, ulcer or rash. Sometime vulval problems can be diagnosed simply from their appearance or by taking other tests such as blood tests or swabs. Others are more difficult to diagnose, and a tissue sample is needed. 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.

## **What is a Vulval Biopsy?**

A vulval biopsy is a procedure in which a small piece of tissue is removed from the vulval area and sent to the laboratory for analysis by a specially trained doctor called a histopathologist.

## **What happens during a Vulval Biopsy?**

The skin will be cleaned and local anaesthetic will be injected into the area. This can cause some brief stinging until the area goes numb. Once numb a small piece of tissue of a few millimetres in size is removed and any bleeding stopped using silver nitrate or a small dissolvable suture (stitch). Occasionally if your vulva is very sore, a short general anaesthetic may be recommended. This will be arranged for a different day.

## **Following the procedure**

The anaesthetic usually wears off after about half an hour and after that the area may sting a little. You may feel more comfortable if you take a pain killer such as Paracetamol or Ibuprofen (if you are not allergic to it).

After you have the biopsy you may find that it stings as you pass urine. Try to be gentle as you wipe from front to back. Please continue to wash the vulval skin every day as normal. It is best to wash with water alone 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). Some women prefer to use a hairdryer on a cool setting to dry the sensitive skin. Keep the hairdryer well away from the area to avoid a blast of air.

## **Activities**

Within a few days you will feel back to your normal self. It is advisable whilst the skin heals not to engage in activities that might irritate the wound such as horse riding, cycling, running or swimming. If stitches have been used avoid swimming until they have dissolved, or the area is fully healed. Sexual intercourse can be resumed once the area is comfortable and fully healed. This may take a few days up to a couple of weeks.

## **Potential complications of having a Vulval Biopsy**

Having a vulval biopsy is a very quick, safe and straight forward procedure without significant risks. Occasionally, the site of a biopsy may bruise or leave a small scar. If the wound starts to bleed after you leave the clinic, lie down and press on the area with a clean tissue. This will usually stop any bleeding but if not or you have concerns contact the clinic or attend the Accident and Emergency unit.

Occasionally the wound can become infected. The symptoms of infection might be pain, swelling, oozing or discharge. Your GP should be able to prescribe some antibiotics if this occurs

## **How will I receive my results?**

Following the procedure, the clinician will explain how long the results are likely to take (usually 2- 3 weeks), how you will be informed of the results and likely follow up.

## **Useful contacts**

We hope you have found this information useful. If there is something you do not understand or if you have any questions, please ask the clinic nurse or telephone our gynaecology/ colposcopy specialist nurses

**Gynaecology Specialist Nurse Cumberland Infirmary Tel: 01228814217**

**Gynaecology Specialist Nurse West Cumberland hospital Tel: 01946 523217**

**Colposcopy Specialist Nurse Tel: 01228 814220**

## **Confidentiality**

**'The Trust's vision is to keep your information safe in our hands.'**

We promise to use your information fairly and legally, and in-line with local and national policies. You have a right to understand how your information is used and you can request a copy of the information we hold about you at any time.

For further information contact the [Subject Access Coordinators](#)

[SACCIC@ncuh.nhs.uk](mailto:SACCIC@ncuh.nhs.uk) or [SACWCH@ncuh.nhs.uk](mailto:SACWCH@ncuh.nhs.uk)

## **Feedback**

We appreciate and encourage feedback, which helps us to improve our services. If you have any comments, compliments or complaints to make about your care, please contact the PALS team (Patient Advice and Liaison Service) on 01228 814008 between 10.30 and 4.30 Monday to Friday or email [PALSCIC@ncuh.nhs.uk](mailto:PALSCIC@ncuh.nhs.uk).

If you would like this factsheet in another language or format, for example Braille, large print or audio the PALS team will be able to assist you (contact details above)

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