

## Patient information

# Vulval Biopsy

Dermatology and Allergy Department

Your doctor has advised you to have a biopsy of your vulval area.

### **What is a vulval biopsy?**

A biopsy is the removal of a small piece of skin from the affected area of your vulva. The tissue is then examined under a microscope by a pathologist.

### **What are the benefits of having a vulval biopsy?**

The aim of the vulval biopsy is to find out what is causing your symptoms and can help to identify the problem and suggest suitable treatment. This is particularly important if vulval skin changes are due to more serious conditions such as malignancy.

### **There are some small risks of having a vulval biopsy**

The biopsy usually takes approx. 20 – 30 minutes from the time you give your consent to leaving the theatre.

The biopsy will leave a small scar. There will be some bleeding at the time of the biopsy, but this will be controlled before you leave the theatre.

Avoid heavy work/prolonged standing for the rest of day after biopsy.

It is a good idea to rest for a couple of hours after the biopsy to minimise the chances of bleeding from the area.

Occasionally, the bleeding can start up again later in the day. If this happens, press on the skin for 15 minutes whilst resting lying down. If the bleeding does not stop then, contact the clinic, or Emergency Department (A&E Department).

Signs of infection of the biopsy site include feeling uncomfortable, swollen, and hot and your wound may ooze. If this happens either contact the Dermatology Dept or see your family doctor (GP) for advice.

### **What will happen if I decide not to have treatment?**

You can discuss your treatment options at anytime during the course of your treatment with your consultant, including your decision not to have treatment.

## **What sort of anaesthetic will be given to me?**

You will be offered a numbing gel such as Lidocaine 5% applied to the area before the local anaesthetic injection.

Local anaesthetic is drug-induced numbness: it may be provided by an anaesthetist, surgeon or other healthcare professional, depending on the technique used. You may experience some slight discomfort during the procedure, but should feel no pain at the biopsy site.

In this instance, on the dermatology department, the local anaesthetic will be administered by either a doctor or a nurse.

Like all medicines, local anaesthetics may sometimes cause side effects, as well as the effects that are needed. You may experience dizziness, blurred vision, drowsiness and occasionally loss of consciousness.

Serious side effects are rare, and include fits, low blood pressure, slowed breathing and changes in heartbeat, which may be life threatening. If you have any concerns about any of these effects you should discuss them with your doctor.

The risks of anaesthetic and surgery are lower for those who are undergoing minor surgery, and who are young, fit, active and well.

You will be given an opportunity to discuss anaesthetic options and risks before your minor surgery at your consultation with the Consultant.

**If you are worried about any of these risks, please speak to your consultant or a member of their team.**

## **What happens when I have the biopsy?**

You can eat light meals as normal before your procedure.

Before your biopsy is done, you will be asked to give your consent to the procedure. You will also have the opportunity to ask any questions or ask for more information prior to your procedure.

You will be asked to undress below the waist, apply a theatre gown and to rest on your back on a theatre bed for the procedure.

You will be offered a numbing gel prior to the local anaesthetic. This is not a painful procedure. The local anaesthetic is then given. Before the procedure is carried out the surgeon will test the area to make certain the area to be biopsied is numb. You may experience some very slight discomfort during the procedure, but should not feel any pain.

The biopsy will then be taken using a small instrument to take a circular piece of skin from the affected site. The biopsy site will then be closed, usually with stitches which are dissolvable and do not need to be taken out.

## **After the procedure.**

If stitches are required, these will dissolve/fall out on their own in 10-14 days and generally do not need to be removed.

You may notice a bloody discharge from the biopsy site and may need to use a panty liner to protect your underwear.

The anaesthetic can take up to an hour and half to wear off. It is usual to experience slight soreness in the area for a few days. This can be relieved by painkillers such as Paracetamol and a warm bath/shower.

It is important to keep the area clean and dry to prevent any problems with infection.

Showers are easier, but if you do have a bath, avoid soaking in bath especially for the first few days after biopsy.

Dry the area thoroughly, do not rub or apply any perfumed feminine products to area.

You may find loose clothing is more comfortable for the first few days after biopsy.

It is advisable to refrain from sex for the first week after biopsy, to avoid irritation and allow the area to heal.

### **How will I find out the results of the biopsy?**

You will be informed of the results, and whether any further treatment is required, either by letter, telephone clinic or next clinic appointment.

### **Feedback**

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

### **Further information**

#### **Broadgreen Hospital Outpatients**

**Alexander Wing**

**Nursing Station**

**Tel: 0151 282 6517**

**Text phone number: 18001 0151 282 6517**

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