

# Vulvoscopy and Excisional Biopsy

## What Happens?

Under general anaesthetic, the skin outside the vagina is examined with a colposcope (binocular microscope). A dilute solution of acetic acid (vinegar) is applied to the skin which enables me to see areas of abnormal cells. Following this, antiseptic is applied to the skin, the areas of abnormal cells are removed or biopsied (sampled). The specimens are sent to pathology and the skin defects closed with dissolving sutures. An anatomical pathologist (specialist doctor qualified in analysis of surgical specimens) issues a report within two to three days in most cases.

## Purpose of the Procedure

To remove or sample abnormal areas of skin in the vagina, or outside, which may later develop into cancer. Some benign conditions are also managed in this way, in order to arrive at a diagnosis.

## Preparation

You will require a general (sleeping) or regional (spinal) anaesthetic. You will be required to fast for around six hours. Please check with my secretarial staff if you are unsure from when to fast. Some patients, depending on their medical condition and associated conditions, may need blood tests, imaging studies or other investigations to be performed. The operation can usually be performed during a patient's period. It is very important to give a full list of your medications prior to the procedure. This also includes natural therapies, herbal preparations and fish oil tablets, which may have an unpredictable effect on the blood's ability to clot.

## Duration of Procedure

Around thirty minutes.

## Post-Procedure Care

After leaving the operating theatre you will usually have a drip or intravenous line in-situ. This is to maintain your hydration as you will have been fasting prior to the procedure. You will be cared for in the Recovery Area of the Operating Theatre which involves one on one care by a specialist member of the nursing staff. After around one to two hours you will be offered something to eat or drink if appropriate, will be able to change back into your street clothes and arrangements for discharge will be initiated. The vast majority are performed as day surgery.

## Post-Discharge Care

Avoid driving or making major decisions within 24 hours of a general anaesthetic. You should be able to resume your normal activities after 24 hours. You may require some mild analgesics such as Panadol, Panadeine 8/15 or Panadeine Forte or Nurofen / Naprogesic. You will be slightly uncomfortable depending upon where the biopsies were taken from and intercourse may be impossible for a short period of time. Bathing is allowed but swimming in public pools should be avoided. There should be no effect on your periods. Excessive bleeding or bruising after the procedure is uncommon and you should notify me if you develop a fever (temperature greater than 37.4 degrees) or signs of infection. Do not apply antiseptics such as Dettol, Betadine etc unless advised by me as they can damage healing skin and are unlikely to be helpful.

## Complications specific to Vulvoscopy and Excisional Biopsy:

- Incomplete removal of the abnormal cells. Sometimes the full extent of the abnormal cells may not be appreciated and I will seek to remove as little skin as possible in order to get the best cosmetic result. Occasionally further surgery may be required. If diagnosis is uncertain at the time of examination a biopsy will be taken in order to arrive at a management plan; this is not meant to be curative.
- Distortion of anatomy. Although I will seek to protect the appearance of the skin and the surgery will be conducted with all skill and attention, there may be an alteration in the appearance of the vaginal or vulval skin which cannot be avoided. The most important part of the operation is treating the underlying condition and avoiding development of a subsequent cancer.

**Consent**

I have been recommended to have: **Vulvoscopy and Excisional Biopsy in order to investigate:**

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Potential issues related to my condition / circumstances may be:

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I understand the above and choose to proceed:

(Signed) .....

(Print Name) .....

(Date) .....

