



Oxford University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Having a vulval biopsy

Information for patients



When you attend your vulval clinic appointment, your clinician may recommend that you have a vulval biopsy. A biopsy is a procedure to collect samples of tissue for analysis by a pathologist or other specialist. The clinician will discuss with you the reasons why you need a biopsy. You will be given an opportunity to discuss this, ask any questions if you have any, and sign a consent form.

Before the procedure

On the day of your procedure please eat normally. Continue taking your medications, including aspirin, warfarin and other anticoagulant medications, unless you have been advised otherwise.

If you are taking warfarin you will need to have a blood test two to five days before your procedure, to check your INR. Please tell us if your INR is above 3.5 as this means that you are more likely to bleed during and after the biopsy. If this is the case, we may have to postpone your biopsy until it has come down to less than 3.5.

Arriving at the hospital

When you arrive at the hospital please go to the Dermatology reception, where the receptionist will direct you to the correct waiting area. You may like to bring a friend or relative with you to keep you company, although they will not be able to be with you during the biopsy.

When it is time for your procedure, a nurse will collect you and take you into the theatre.

Vulval biopsies may take place on the day of your consultation or be booked on a later date.

Please tell the doctor or nurse if:

- you are taking warfarin, aspirin, clopidogrel, dipyridamole, DOACS (Direct oral anticoagulants) such as apixaban, rivaroxaban, edoxaban and dabigatran or any other medicines that can thin your blood
- you have any allergies or are allergic to local anaesthetic or adrenaline
- you have heart problems, a pacemaker or are prone to fainting
- you have a known blood-borne infection, such as Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C or HIV.

What happens during the procedure?

A nurse will inject some local anaesthetic into your skin. This will sting briefly but quickly makes the area go numb. This means that you should not feel any pain or discomfort during the procedure. Once the area is numb, the nurse will take a very small biopsy using a special biopsy tool. This collects a small section of tissue, about 4mm across. We will close the area where we have collected the biopsy with a dissolvable stitch.

Skin biopsies usually take 20 minutes to perform.

After the procedure we will give you advice on how to look after the area.

After the procedure

The local anaesthetic will usually wear off in around 1-2 hours. If you feel any pain or discomfort we recommend that you take paracetamol. Please follow the dosage instructions on the packet or ask your pharmacist for advice.

You may find that the area where we collected the biopsy stings when you urinate. It may be more comfortable to take a small glass of tepid water in with you to the toilet, to pour over the area when you urinate; this should dilute the urine and relieve any stinging.

It is advisable not to bathe, shower or wash the area until the next day, as this may make it bleed. After this time you can wash as normal. Your doctor will advise you not to use shower gel or soap as this can irritate your skin and make it dry. They may recommend that you use a certain type of moisturiser to wash with, which they may prescribe for you or you will be able to get from your GP.

If you start to bleed or notice blood, please do not panic. A small amount of bleeding is normal. Applying firm continuous pressure to the area for 20 minutes will stop most bleeding.

We take every precaution to prevent your wound from being exposed to infection. Despite this, some wounds will still become infected. Symptoms of infection include an increase in pain, redness, swelling or a discharge from the wound.

If you experience any of these symptoms we advise that you contact the Dermatology department or your GP.

The stitch should dissolve within a week. If this has not happened after this time please contact the practice nurse at your GP's surgery, who can remove it.

It is advisable to avoid sexual intercourse until the stitch has dissolved and the area has healed.

We advise that you avoid strenuous exercise for 1-2 days after the procedure, as this may cause the wound to start bleeding. Avoid swimming until the stitch has dissolved and the area has healed.

If you have concerns with how the biopsy site is healing and would like advice, please contact the **Dermatology Outpatient department**:

Tel: **01865 228 241**

(8.30am to 5.00pm, Monday to Friday)

If you are a private patient, please contact the **Private Patient Administrator**:

Tel: **01865 228 222**

(8.30am to 4.30pm, Monday to Friday)

Getting your results

It can take up to six weeks for your biopsy results to come back. Your consultant or doctor will then write to you to explain whether we have found a diagnosis and, if so, how we plan to treat it.

If you have not received your results after six weeks, please contact your **dermatology consultant's secretary**:

Tel: **01865 228 202**

(8:00am to 4:00pm, Monday to Friday)

If you are a private patient, please contact the **Private Patient Administrator**:

Tel: **01865 228 222**

(08.30am to 4.30pm, Monday to Friday)

Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

Author: Dr Susan Cooper and Eilir Evans, Specialist Nurse
Dermatology Outpatients Department
Revised: Main Author SJA/Contributors IMK-G, RGAJ, LB & BEMM
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charity@ouh.nhs.uk | 01865 743 444 | hospitalcharity.co.uk

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