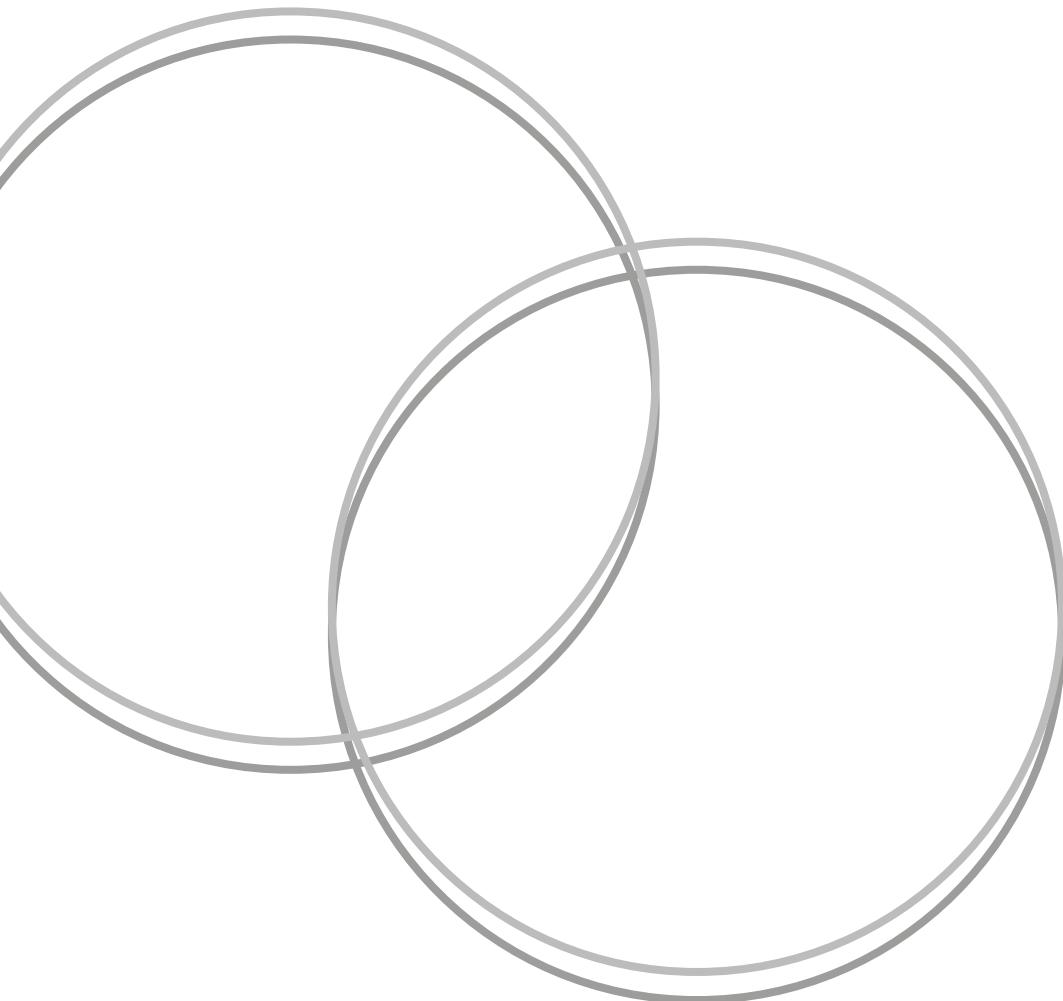


Carbon Dioxide Laser Treatment for vulva

Information for patients



What is vulval skin?

The “vulva” is the term used to describe the visible part of the female genitalia which includes the inner and outer “lips” (labia), clitoris, mons pubis and perineum.

How does laser treatment work?

The laser is a powerful light that burns the abnormal cells and leave behind burn like area which on healing is expected to regenerate normal cells.

The laser beam is directed at the affected area, causing the targeted tissue to be destroyed. This can help to reduce symptoms, improve the appearance of the vulva, and potentially prevent the development of cancer.

In the case of the vulva, laser treatment can be used to treat various conditions, such as:

- **Vulva intraepithelial neoplasia (VIN):** A precancerous condition that affects the cells of the vulva.
- **Vulval Paget's disease:** It is an abnormal change in the cells which cover the skin (outer layer) of the vulva (outer folds of skin around your vagina). This may occur in patches (lesions) on your vulva.
- **Condyloma acuminata (genital warts):** Warts caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV).
- **Vulval lichen sclerosus:** A chronic skin condition that causes the skin of the vulva to become thin, white, and itchy.

What are the long-term benefits of laser treatment?

Laser treatment can provide long-term benefits, such as:

- **Symptom relief:** The procedure can help to reduce symptoms such as itching, burning, and pain.
- **Improved quality of life:** A better quality of life can be achieved by addressing the physical and emotional effects of vulvar conditions.
- **Reduced risk of cancer:** In some cases, laser treatment can help to reduce the risk of developing cancer.

What to expect on the day of treatment?

The treatment takes between 10 to 20 min and sometimes longer depending on the extent of the disease. The treatment is performed under sedation or general anaesthetic. You can go home on the same day. This can also be done in an outpatients' settings under local anaesthesia.

What to expect after your laser treatment?

After the procedure: You may experience some discomfort, swelling, or bleeding. Your doctor will provide you with specific instructions for aftercare, which may include wound care, pain management, and avoiding certain activities.

Mild discomfort or soreness:

- Whilst you are healing, it is common to have pain and some swelling at the place where the treatment was performed. The pain usually does not last longer than 2 weeks but worse for the first 48 hours and will get better over the next 2 weeks.
- Cool packs covered and applied gently may give some relief from these symptoms.
- You may find it useful to take pain relief such as Ibuprofen or Paracetamol.
- You may also be provided with some extra painkillers (eg, codeine, Gabapentin)

Swelling or redness:

- These are also common and may last for a short time.
- You will also be provided with creams like silver sulfadiazine and trimovate from hospital.

Increased sensitivity:

- Your vulva may be more sensitive to touch for a while.

Light bleeding or spotting:

- You can experience some bloodstained watery discharge for few days following your treatment and you should wear a sanitary pad during this time.

How should I take care of myself after the laser treatment?

- To avoid infection whilst you are healing, wash your hands with soap and water before and after you touch your vulva.
- To prevent the burning sensation when you wee, pour water over your vulvar area while weeing
- Wash your vulva gently each day during your bath or shower, but do not use any perfumed products which may irritate the skin.
- It is advised to avoid swimming pools until the area is healed to avoid infection.
- 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 feel more comfortable in cotton underpants and loose-fitting clothes after this kind of treatment.

How long does recovery take?

Recovery time can vary from person to person. Generally, most women experience significant improvement within a few weeks.

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 the medication provided/advised.
- If your vulva is not healing after 4 weeks.

For these and any other concerns, please see your **local doctor** or go to your **nearest hospital emergency department**.

Contact numbers:

Phone: **01865 231571** option 1 – patient pathway and then click again option 1 General Gynae for your appointment.

Or email: **GynaeUSC@ouh.nh.uk**

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.

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