



PATIENT INFORMATION

Word Catheter for Bartholins Cyst/Abscess

What is a Bartholins Cyst/Abscess?

Bartholins glands are two pea sized glands, which lie next to the entrance to the vagina. Unless they are diseased or infected, you cannot usually see or feel these glands. They make a small amount of mucus like fluid, which helps in keeping the entrance to the vagina moist. A fluid-filled swelling (a cyst) sometimes develops from a blocked duct that drains the fluid from the bartholins gland. Sometimes a gland gets infected, which may then develop into a collection of pus (an abscess). A small operation is a common treatment for a bartholins cyst or abscess.

About 3 in 100 women will develop a fluid-filled swelling (Bartholin's cyst) or a collection of pus (Bartholin's abscess) at some point in their life.

What are the symptoms of Bartholin's cysts and abscesses?

A Bartholin's cyst or abscess typically only develops on one of the two glands. If a cyst remains small or does not become infected then you may have no symptoms. You may just feel a small lump to one side at the lower end of the entrance to the vagina, which may cause no problems. However, a larger cyst may cause discomfort- in particular, when walking, sitting or having sex. Very large cysts can become quite painful.

With an abscess, a lump develops and quickly gets bigger, typically over a few hours or days. It is likely to become very painful. You may feel unwell and have a high temperature and the skin over the abscess tends to become red, hot and very tender. You may also have a discharge.

How is it diagnosed?

An examination by a Doctor can usually diagnose the problem. A Bartholin's fluid-filled swelling (cyst) and collection of pus (abscess) have a typical appearance. No test is usually needed to make the diagnosis.

What is the treatment for Bartholin's cysts and abscesses?

Treatment is not always needed. If you have a small fluid -filled swelling (cyst) that causes no symptoms and does not become infected, then it may be best simply to leave it alone. However, you should always report a 'lump' in the area around your vagina (your vulva) to your Doctor. Do not just assume a small lump is a Bartholin's cyst. It is best for a Doctor to examine you and confirm the diagnosis and to rule out other causes of lumps in the vulva. If a cyst causes symptoms, then it can be treated. A collection of pus, confirmed as a Bartholin's abscess, will almost always need treatment as it can be very painful. However, if an abscess is left long enough it is likely to burst and then may resolve without treatment. This is not recommended though, as it will be very painful and you could become quite ill. Antibiotics may help in early stages but a small operation is needed in many cases.

Bartholin's cyst or abscess can be drained and a new duct opening created either under general anesthetic or with a simpler procedure under local anesthetic.

Insertion of a Word catheter

This is a small, thin rubber tube. Under local anesthetic, the head of the catheter is inserted through a small cut made into the cyst or abscess. The tip of the catheter has a tiny balloon which is inflated to keep the catheter in place for 2-4 weeks. Whilst the catheter is in place you can go about your normal activities. The aim is to keep the opening from closing up. As the tissues heal, it allows the cells to form a new tube (duct) over the catheter.

Most people are not aware of the catheter and in most cases it will drop out on its own within 2-4 weeks. If it has not fallen out by 3 weeks following the procedure please contact the Gynaecology Secretaries on 01803 654608 to arrange an appointment to have the catheter removed. This is a painless procedure.

Complications/Post Op Procedure:

You will need to rest for 24 to 48 hours after you leave hospital.

Initially you will have discharge from the catheter. You should wear a sanitary pad to absorb the discharge. Do not use tampons until the area has healed.

There may be some bleeding from the surgical area. This should last 2-4 weeks.

If you experience discomfort after the insertion, pain relief, such as paracetamol, can be taken, please follow the dosage advice on the packet.

You can bath or shower but avoid bubble bath or oils, while the wound is healing.

Keep the area as clean and dry as possible. The area should be patted dry after washing.

Avoid sexual intercourse while the word catheter is in situ.

Avoid tight fitting clothes until you are pain free.

Please contact the Gynecology Nurses on 01803 655931 if you have any questions or have any of the following symptoms:

- Increase in bleeding
- Increase in pain
- High temperature
- Increase in swelling/redness
- smelly discharge from the surgical site

Will it happen again?

Bartholin's cyst or abscess can happen again (recur) after treatment and in some cases treatment needs to be repeated.

Can Bartholin's cysts or abscesses be prevented?

Not usually. Most occur 'out of the blue' for no apparent reason. Some Bartholin's abscesses are due to sexually transmitted infections and so using a condom when having sex may prevent some cases.