

## Treating a Bartholin's cyst with Word catheter

### Ambulatory Gynaecology Unit

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#### What is a Bartholin's cyst/abscess?

The Bartholin's glands are situated near the opening of the vagina. They produce fluid that lubricates the vulva. The tiny tubes that carry the fluid in the gland can become blocked which can cause a painless swelling called a Bartholin's cyst.

If the cyst becomes infected and pus collects it can become painful, red, hot to the touch and swollen. This is a Bartholin's abscess. You may find it difficult to walk, pass urine or have sexual intercourse. The cause for a Bartholin's abscess is usually unknown. It may be caused by bacteria normally occurring in the vagina or by a sexually transmitted infection.

The doctor will diagnose a Bartholin's abscess by examining you. A swab may be taken at the time of treatment to identify the type of bacteria causing the abscess.

A cyst may heal by itself but an abscess may cause pain or burst without treatment, and the problem may reoccur.

#### What treatments are available?

Antibiotics may clear up the infection but surgery may be needed as an outpatient or inpatient.

#### Word catheter

The doctor will explain the procedure to you and gain written consent. You will then be asked to undress from the waist down, cover yourself with a sheet and lay on the procedure couch.

Local anaesthetic will be injected into the area and a small cut will be made in the abscess to allow the fluid in the gland to drain. A small plastic tube is inserted into the cut to allow it to drain. A balloon inside the tube is inflated to keep it in place. This is to ensure the tissue can heal around the balloon to prevent the abscess from reforming. This procedure takes around 15 minutes.

The catheter will remain in place for a few weeks for the wound to heal fully.

#### What are the risks?

- Infection
- Bleeding
- Incomplete drainage
- Recurrence.

#### Looking after the wound

Keep the wound clean and dry. You may shower as normal but please ensure the area is dried thoroughly afterwards using a hairdryer on a cool setting or kitchen roll. We advise no bathing for the duration the catheter is in situ as there is an increased risk of infection.

If stitches are used they will usually dissolve after 10 days.

There may be some discomfort which should be controlled by simple painkillers such as paracetamol or ibuprofen.

Although it is possible to have sexual intercourse with the Word catheter in place it is advisable to avoid this for two weeks following the procedure to avoid reinfection and to allow the wound to heal. You may return to normal activities the day after your procedure.

## **Follow up**

A follow up appointment will be made for you to return for the word catheter to be removed. The contact details of the Ambulatory Gynaecology Department will be given to you should you have any questions or concerns following the procedure

## **Contact us**

You can call Ward M2 for advice at any time on 020 8296 2150. If we feel you need to be examined, then we will advise you to attend your GP or A&E as appropriate.

## **Please contact your GP or A&E if you experience any of the following:**

- Fever
- Any bleeding or discharge
- Redness or swelling to the area
- Increased pain, or
- Just feel unwell.

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