

Marsupialisation of Bartholin's Cyst or Abscess

What is the problem?

The Bartholin's glands lie at the entrance to the vagina and secrete mucus. The duct to a gland can become blocked causing a small swelling called a cyst. If this cyst becomes infected an abscess containing pus forms.

What is the operation?

A 'marsupialisation' which simply means 'to form a pouch', is performed to allow the mucus secreted by the gland to drain away. The operation is performed under a general anaesthetic, sometimes as an emergency procedure, and takes about 10-15 minutes.

Are there any alternatives?

When an abscess first appears it can be treated with antibiotics but if it does not settle down quickly or returns an operation is needed.

What happens after the operation?

You can usually go home the same day and normal activities can usually be resumed within two-three days. Very occasionally the problem can occur again in the future, despite having had this operation.

When you go home

1. The area will feel tender for between three to five days afterwards. If necessary take pain relief e.g. Paracetamol or Aspirin as prescribed in the instructions.
2. It is important to keep the area very clean and dry and we suggest regular baths or showers of plain water followed by patting the area dry with a towel or hair dryer. If you are able you should try and rinse yourself down after going to the toilet. You should not soak in the bath for long periods or use strong bubble baths, salts or antiseptic solutions in the water as they may cause irritation.
3. You should try and keep your bowels as regular as possible by drinking plenty of fluids and by eating a high fibre diet and plenty of fruit.
4. If after discharge you develop any of the following symptoms, or have any concerns, do not hesitate to contact your own General Practitioner (GP) or the Emergency Gynaecology Assessment Unit (telephone number 01733 673758) for advice:
 - i) High temperature
 - ii) Excessive pain/vaginal loss e.g. more than a heavy period
 - iii) Frequency or pain when passing urine.
5. Normally there would not be a hospital follow up after this procedure but if you have any further problems return to your GP, in the first instance, who will be able to help you.