



Going Home After Vulvar Surgery

This handout offers information on how to manage your care when you go home after vulvar surgery.

You may be given a separate handout on the Telehomecare Remote Surgical Monitoring program. This program allows you to connect to a registered nurse after you go home.

After you go home

- Take acetaminophen (example: Tylenol) 650 mg by mouth every 4 hours and ibuprofen 600 mg by mouth every 6 hours to manage your discomfort/pain. You may need to do this for 2 to 3 days after your surgery. After this only take these medications when needed. Talk to your surgeon about other options if you cannot use one or both of these medications.
- Your surgeon will may also give you a prescription for pain medication.
- Do not drive until you stop taking the pain medication the surgeon prescribed for you.
- Slowly return to your regular diet. This may take up to 3 weeks. Drink 6 to 8 cups (1 cup = 250ml) of fluids every day.
- You may need to take a stool softener or a laxative if you are not having regular bowel movements (what is normal for you).
- You may go home with a urinary catheter. You will be given the information you need to manage it if this applies to you.

Follow the other instructions below for the type of hysterectomy you had (see the box that has been checked for you by the nurse).

Vulvectomy / Wide Local Excision

- Change your maxi pad or dressing if it becomes soaked with yellow/pink drainage. Call your surgeon if your maxi pad or dressing is soaked with blood.
- Do not wear tight underwear or tight fitting clothes. You can use a maxi pad to protect your underwear.
- Remove your dressing the day after your surgery.
- You have stitches. Your surgeon will tell you if they need to be removed or if they will dissolve on their own.
- Have a sitz bath 2 to 3 times a day. See the instructions for how to have a sitz bath on page 2 of this handout.
- After you urinate or have a bowel movement, rinse the area with a water squirt bottle. Pat the area dry. Keep the incision as dry as possible.
- If your surgeon prescribed Flamazine cream for you, apply it to your incision 2 times a day as directed.
- Ask your surgeon how long you need to be off work.
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- Everyone heals differently. You will slowly be able to do more activities as you feel better.
 - No lifting more than 15 pounds (6.8 kilograms) for 3 weeks.
 - No driving for 3 weeks.
 - No strenuous exercise (example: vacuuming, lawn mowing, golfing, swimming, weight lifting) for 3 to 6 weeks. Your doctor will tell you when it is safe.
- No sex or anything in your vagina for a minimum of 6 weeks. Your doctor will tell you when it is safe.

Lymphadenectomy (or lymph node dissection/biopsy)

- If you have a small drain(s) in your groin area, a visiting nurse will come to your home to help you manage it.
- Wash your groin area with water and mild soap. It is important to keep it clean and dry.

LASER

- If you have a dressing, remove the day after your surgery.
- Do not wear tight underwear or tight fitting clothes. You can use a maxi pad to protect your underwear.
- If your surgeon prescribed Flamazine cream for you, apply it to your laser treated area 2 times a day as directed.
- Ask your surgeon how long you need to be off work. This is normally 1 to 3 days.
- Everyone heals differently. You will slowly be able to do more activities as you feel better.

How to have a sitz bath

A sitz bath is a basin (type of bowl) you use to soak your vulvar area. To help prevent infection, soak your vulvar area in a clean sitz bath or bathtub 2 to 3 times a day. You can buy a sitz bath at a pharmacy or a medical supply store. You can also use your bathtub. Your bathtub needs to be cleaned well before you use it.

Instructions

1. Fill the sitz bath or bathtub with warm water. Do not add anything to the water.
2. After the sitz bath, use a hair dryer on low temperature to dry your vulvar area or pat it dry with a clean towel. Do not rub your vulvar area.
3. Clean the sitz bath or bathtub well after each use.

For questions or concerns

Call the nurse navigator at 905-576-8711 extension 32917 (between Monday to Friday from 8 am to 4 pm – except on holidays) if you have any of the symptoms below. Go to a walk-in clinic or the emergency department at the hospital closest to you after-hours or on weekends/holidays.

- Increasing amount of bleeding from your vagina
- Increasing amount of pain in your abdomen (belly)
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- No bowel movement or passing of gas for more than 24 hours
- A fever above 38.3° C/100.9°F at any time or above 38.0° C/100.4°F for more than an hour
- Extreme shaking and chills
- Redness or swelling of your incision
- A bad smelling discharge from your incision

Go to the emergency department at the hospital closest to you for any medical emergency.

Follow up appointment

- You will be given a follow up appointment to see your surgeon in 2 to 4 weeks (this may be different if you had a LASER procedure). Call the receptionist at your surgeon's office within 1 week after you go home if you did not receive this appointment.
- At this appointment, your surgeon will talk to you about your pathology results.
- You will go to the Durham Regional Cancer Centre (DRCC) or Colposcopy Clinic for this appointment. Bring your Ontario Health Card (OHIP) with you to this appointment.

Talk to a member of your healthcare team if you have questions or do not understand any of the information in this handout.

For more information, go to the Cancer Care pages on the Lakeridge Health website at www.lakeridgehealth.on.ca. Click on Our Services > Diagnosis > Gynecologic Oncology DAP.

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