



Going Home After Vulvar Surgery

This handout offers information you need to manage your care after vulvar surgery.

Instructions for all patients

- Your surgeon will give you a prescription for pain medication
- You will slowly be able to return to your regular diet. This may take up to 3 weeks. Drink 6 to 8 cups (1 cup = 250ml) of fluids every day. Eat foods with bran, whole grains, fruits and vegetables to help prevent constipation.
- You may go home with a urinary catheter. Your surgeon will talk to you about this if needed.

The nurse will check the box for the instructions you need to follow after your surgery.

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 3 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.
- 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.
 - No sex or anything in your vagina for 4 to 6 weeks.

Lymphadenectomy or Lymphadenectomy (or lymph node dissection)

- 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.

For questions or concerns

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

- 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

Your 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). If you are not given this appointment before you leave the hospital, call the receptionist at your surgeon's office within 1 week after you go home.
- 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 DRCC ID card and your Ontario Health Card (OHIP) with you to this appointment.

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. Use a mild, unscented soap, such as Dove® soap to gently wash/rinse your vulvar area.
3. Soak your vulvar area for 10 minutes. Rinse the soap off.
4. 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.
5. Clean the sitz bath or bathtub well after each use.

Please talk to a member of your healthcare team if you have questions or don't 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.

Last reviewed: October 2020