

After your vulval biopsy

A small sample of skin has been taken to confirm the diagnosis. The area heals quickly — this sheet covers what to expect over the next fortnight.

After numbing the skin with local anaesthetic, a small piece of skin — three to four millimetres across, about the size of a match head — was removed and sent to the laboratory. The site may have been closed with a dissolving stitch or left to heal on its own; both heal well. The anaesthetic wears off over next few hours, and the area will be tender that evening.

First 24 hours

Some oozing.
Pad, not a tampon.

Days 2–5

Tender. Shower daily,
pat dry, ointment.

1–2 weeks

Stitches dissolve.
No sex or swimming.

2 weeks

Results back;
follow-up visit.

Bleeding and pain

- Oozing or spotting for a few days is normal — use a pad, not a tampon.
- For brisker bleeding, lie down and press firmly through a folded pad for ten minutes by the clock, without lifting to check — this stops almost all bleeding.
- Paracetamol regularly on the first day rather than waiting, and ibuprofen if it suits you.
- A cool pack in a soft cloth, ten minutes at a time, helps on the first day.
- Passing urine may sting — pour warm water over the area as you go, then pat dry.

Washing

- Shower once a day from the day after — let water run over the area, do not scrub or use soap. No baths for one to two weeks.
- Pat dry, or use a hairdryer on cool.
- You can use a plain ointment or petroleum jelly once or twice a day. Do not use antiseptic or antibiotic cream unless specifically prescribed.

Activity, sex and tampons

- Normal walking and daily activity the next day, in loose clothing and cotton underwear; avoid vigorous exercise, cycling and horse riding for about a week.
- Avoid constipation and straining; use a stool softener if you need one.
- No intercourse or tampons until healed, usually one to two weeks.
- No baths, spas, pools or the beach for one to two weeks.

A dissolving stitch disappears over one to two weeks; a small piece coming away in the shower is expected.

GET HELP IF YOU DEVELOP

- Bleeding that soaks a pad within an hour, or will not stop with ten minutes of pressure
- Increasing pain, redness or swelling after the second day
- A thick or offensive discharge, a fever, or feeling generally unwell

YOUR RESULTS

The laboratory takes a week to ten days, and you will be given an appointment to discuss the result. If you have not heard within two weeks, please ring the rooms rather than assume it was normal.

SOURCES

1. International Society for the Study of Vulvovaginal Disease. Vulvar Biopsy Care. ISSVD patient handout.

2. Vulvovaginal Disorders. Biopsy After Care — patient handout.

3. Melbourne Sexual Health Centre. Skin biopsy — sexual health fact sheet.