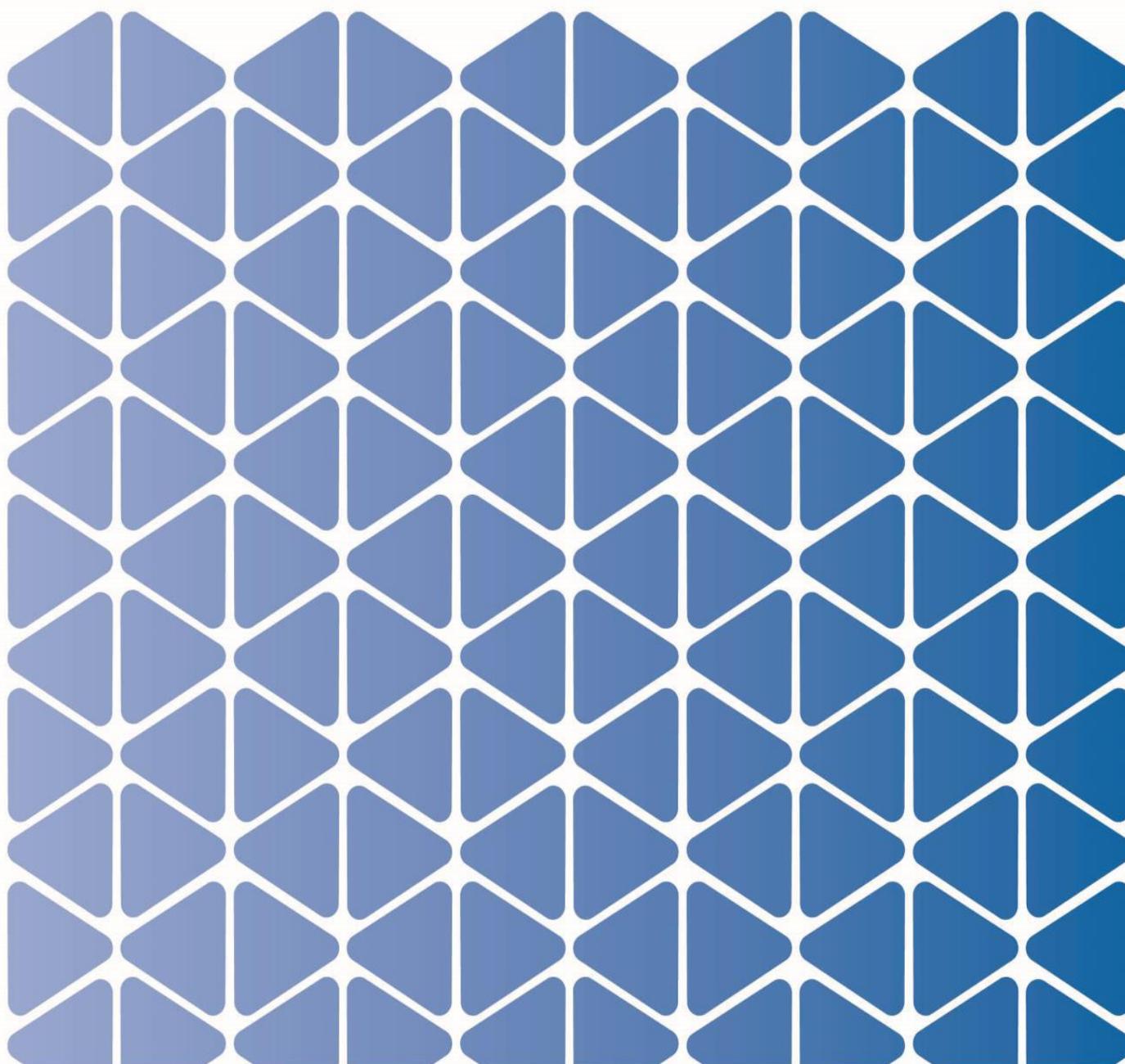


PATIENT INFORMATION

VULVA AND VAGINAL BIOPSIES



We hope that this leaflet will help you understand your care options. We hope that you will feel comfortable to ask questions of your health professional so that you can work together to make a plan that meets your needs and priorities.



Remember you can always ask the healthcare professional to explain things differently, explain things again, or to write down information for you.

What is a vulval or vaginal biopsy?

This is when a small sample of tissue (skin/muscle) is taken from the vulva or vagina. This sample is sent to the laboratory to see if there are any abnormal signs, including signs of cancer.

How is the biopsy taken?

A biopsy is a simple procedure that can be done during an appointment.

This involves:

- Numbing the affected area using a local anaesthetic (injection to stop any pain). This will sting, but after a few minutes the area will become numb.
- Taking the sample itself will take less than 1 minute.
- You may feel pulling or pressure on the area of the biopsy but you should not feel any pain during the procedure.

What are the risks?

Biopsies are safe and you are unlikely to have any problems.

The rare risks are:

- Infection. This may slow down healing and make the area sore, but it can be treated with antibiotics.
- Bleeding under the skin (haematoma) may occur at the biopsy site. This usually goes away on its own. Very rarely a second procedure may be needed.
- Any bleeding can usually be stopped with silver nitrate, but sometimes a stitch is needed to stop bleeding.
- There may be a very small scar at the site of the biopsy.
- Sometimes it is not possible to make a diagnosis from the skin/muscle sample.

Are there any alternatives?

This procedure is the best way for us to work out how best to help you. You can always say no to the procedure. It may take longer to understand your problem without the biopsy.

Consent

If you are happy to go ahead with your procedure, a doctor or nurse may ask you to sign a consent form. If you have any questions, please ask a member of staff looking after you.

How can I prepare for a biopsy?

Eat, drink and take any medications as you normally would. If you are not allergic to painkillers, we recommend taking paracetamol or ibuprofen before your appointment. Please follow the advice on the packaging.

What happens after the biopsy?

- You should be able to travel home on your own. You may prefer to have someone with you and may wish to keep the rest of your day free.
- The local anaesthetic will stop working after a few hours. You can take Paracetamol or Ibuprofen (if you are not allergic) to manage the pain.
- Keep the biopsy site clean and dry. We recommend that you do not wash the area for 12 hours following the procedure. After a shower or bath, you should gently pat the skin dry. Do not rub the area as this will slow down healing.
- It is normal for the area to be red and tender for the first few days.
- Some spotting of blood may occur for about two to three days. Sometimes you may notice a small amount of bleeding and it is normal. You may apply pressure to the area for about 10minutes and usually the bleeding should settle.
- You should avoid sexual intercourse until the area is healed and comfortable.
- If you have had a stitch, this will gradually dissolve over the next one to two weeks.
- We will write to you within 4-6 weeks with the biopsy results and let you know what will happen next. If you do not hear from the hospital within this time scale you should contact your consultant's secretary.

Having read the above information, it might be helpful to think about the following...

- What do I want to ask my healthcare professional?
- What is worrying me about this procedure right now?
- What else is important in my life right now?
- Who is able to support me?
- Would I like someone to come with me to my appointment if possible? *There may be restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic.*

Notes

You can fill out the following table with your healthcare professional. This will help you to think about which option is best for you, given your individual situation. Doing nothing is also an option.

My Options include...	The Benefits Why is this option good for me?	The Risks What is not so good about this option for me?
To have a biopsy		
To do nothing		

You might also want to ask...

- Are there any activities that I need to avoid after the procedure?
- Is there anything that I can do to help myself?
- Where can I go to get more information?

Notes

Remember you can always ask the healthcare professional to explain things differently, explain things again, or to write down information for you.

Who should I contact if I have any problems?

You should seek advice by calling the Emergency Gynaecology Assessment Unit (EGAU) or your GP if you have any of the following symptoms:

- Smelly discharge
- Heavy vaginal bleeding
- Severe abdominal pain
- High temperature

If you have any questions the EGAU helpline is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. **If your symptoms get worse, please call your GP, 111, or 999.**

If your symptoms or condition worsens, or if you are concerned about anything, please call your GP, 111, or 999.

Patient Experience

We know that being admitted to hospital can be a difficult and unsettling time for you and your loved ones. If you have any questions or concerns, please do speak with a member of staff on the ward or in the relevant department who will do their best to answer your questions and reassure you.

Feedback

Feedback is really important and useful to us – it can tell us where we are working well and where improvements can be made. There are lots of ways you can share your experience with us including completing our Friends and Family Test – cards are available and can be posted on all wards, departments and clinics at our hospitals. We value your comments and feedback and thank you for taking the time to share this with us.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

If you have any concerns or questions about your care, we advise you to talk with the nurse in charge or the department manager in the first instance as they are best placed to answer any questions or resolve concerns quickly. If the relevant member of staff is unable to help resolve your concern, you can contact the PALS Team. We offer informal help, advice or support about any aspect of hospital services & experiences.

Our PALS team will liaise with the various departments in our hospitals on your behalf, if you feel unable to do so, to resolve your problems and where appropriate refer to outside help.

If you are still unhappy you can contact the Complaints Department, who can investigate your concerns. You can make a complaint orally, electronically or in writing and we can advise and guide you through the complaints procedure.

How to contact PALS:

Telephone Patient Services: 0300 123 1732 or via email at: wah-tr.PALS@nhs.net

Opening times:

The PALS telephone lines are open Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 4.00pm. Please be aware that you may need to leave a voicemail message, but we aim to return your call within one working day.

If you are unable to understand this leaflet, please communicate with a member of staff.