



Going home after your Vulvectomy

This is an information leaflet to help you following your Vulva Surgery. It is common for you to have some side effects from the surgery and these side effects may last days, weeks or months.

Before you go home, be sure to ask any questions you may have about your recovery and how you can talk to a nurse or doctor if needed.

What to expect

Following your surgery it is common for you to experience:

- ▶ Some pain or soreness at the surgical site.
- ▶ A moderate amount of blood tinged loss from the wound for 1-2 weeks
- ▶ Have moderate bruising or swelling at the surgical site.
- ▶ Have a change in the direction of your urine stream; this can be distressing for women who usually squat to urinate as the stream may now spray. It often helps to sit on the toilet and further back than usual.

Wound care

Always wash your hands before and after your vulval care. The stitches are dissolvable but keep the wound as clean and dry as possible.

Do:

- ▶ Wash the wound three times a day and after each bowel action until the wound is healed, you have been educated on how to do this by the nursing staff while you were in hospital.
- ▶ Use warm water only to wash the area and use either a handheld shower nozzle or a new spray bottle with a nozzle. Pat the area dry gently; it is often easy to use disposable non lint cloths such as chux for this to save laundering towels. Complete drying with a hairdryer set on the coolest setting. This is often easier if lying down on a bed.
- ▶ Avoid wearing underwear and wear loose fitting clothing as much as possible.
- ▶ Apply any ointment prescribed by your doctors until the container is finished.

Do not:

- ▶ Have a bath /spa /swim in a pool as this increases the risk of infection. Shower only.
- ▶ Wear tight clothing, aim for cotton underwear if wearing any.
- ▶ Use any lotions, perfumes or talcum powder on your vulval area.
- ▶ Use tampons until area is completely healed- use sanitary pads for any blood loss.

Pain and Bowel Management

Paracetamol may be used to relieve mild to moderate pain. Ensure you follow the directions on the pack unless advised otherwise. Anti-inflammatory and stronger pain relievers may be taken as prescribed but can cause constipation. If unsure, ask your healthcare professional for more specific advice about what medicines have been prescribed for you.

Take any laxatives prescribed by your doctor to ensure bowel motions are soft and easy to pass without straining.

Diet

Eat a balanced diet, with adequate protein to help your wound heal. Your diet should include a healthy protein source (such as meat, fish, chicken, beans, eggs, nuts and seeds, cheese or tofu) at each meal as well as wholegrains, vegetables, fruits and low fat dairy foods or alternatives.

Avoid constipation by drinking plenty of water (6-8 glasses per day). Oats, fresh or dried fruits and prune juice add extra soluble fibre to your diet, which can keep your stools softer.

Activity

The ward physiotherapist & Occupational Therapist (OT) will discuss the booklet "Physiotherapy post-operative advice" to explain exercise restrictions and recovery of healthy bladder and bowel habits prior to your discharge. Ask ward staff for a copy if you do not already have one. This will include information regarding:

- ▶ Amount of rest required and positioning.
- ▶ Amount of time you can sit upright.
- ▶ The use of a pressure relieving cushion.
- ▶ Continue wearing your TED stockings until you are back to normal mobility (refer to TED stocking brochure).
- ▶ Avoid driving until the wound has healed. Check your insurance policy to ensure there are no exclusions.
- ▶ Returning to work. This will depend on what you do, please discuss with your doctor.
- ▶ Sexual activity can usually be resumed 6 to 8 weeks after your surgery. Your vulval area has to heal completely first. DO NOT put anything into the vagina until after your follow up appointment and doctors advice says the area is healed.

If you have any concerns or worries in relation to your surgery and recovery contact your GP or discuss with your surgeon at your follow up appointment. The Oncology Liaison Nurses can be contacted on 6458 1005 pager 3350 Monday to Friday.



This document can be made available in alternative formats on request.

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