

Inflatable Balloon Catheter to Treat Bartholin's Cysts or Abscesses

Information for patients, relatives and carers

Obstetrics and Gynaecology

① For more information, please contact:

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Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE

or

Maple Ward Telephone: 01723 236262

Scarborough Hospital

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This leaflet is written to help people who have been offered this procedure to decide whether to agree (consent) to it or not.

What is a Bartholin abscess?

There is a Bartholin's gland at each side of the entrance to the vagina. During sexual arousal, these glands produce lubrication that enters the vagina through a small duct (tube) from each gland. If the duct becomes blocked the gland can fill with mucus and a cyst (a fluid-filled lump) can occur. An abscess can occur if the gland or cyst becomes infected. Symptoms may include tenderness and pain, fever, and pain or discomfort during sex.

Surgical treatment may be used to drain it or to make a permanent opening that allows the gland to drain freely, although there is a risk that this opening closes up and the cyst or abscess recurs.

What is the inflatable catheter and how is it put in?

Insertion of an inflatable balloon is a minor surgical procedure that can be performed as an outpatient with a local anaesthetic to numb the area. It involves making a passage from the cyst or abscess through which the gland can drain.

You will be given a local anaesthetic. A tiny cut is made into the cyst or abscess, which is then drained. A flexible tube (called a catheter) with a small, specially designed balloon at its tip is inserted into the cyst or abscess to create a passage. The balloon is inflated with liquid and this usually holds the balloon catheter in place, occasionally a stitch may be used to partly close the cut and help hold the balloon in position.

How long does it stay in place?

It is then left in place for up to four weeks to allow new skin to form around the passage and for the wound to heal. The balloon is then deflated and removed, allowing the gland to drain through the newly formed passage. An appointment will be made for you to return to the ward after three to four weeks so the catheter can be removed.

Occasionally the catheter falls out before four weeks. If this occurs in the first five days, you can ring the ward and the doctor will try to reinsert it for you. If it is more than five days, then the doctor would be likely to suggest just waiting and seeing what happens. Then only if the abscess builds up again the doctor may consider putting in another catheter at this stage.

What if the catheter hurts when I am at home?

If the catheter is painful in the meantime, then you should contact the (GAU in York or Maple Ward in Scarborough) and arrange to return so that you can be examined, and perhaps have a small amount of the fluid in the balloon removed.

What are the advantages of this procedure?

The advantages of this procedure are that you do not need to be admitted to hospital and can avoid having a general anaesthetic.

You will be able to take up normal activities again once you are comfortable. This includes exercise and sex.

Bartholin's abscesses can occur again however with this technique there is less chance of the abscess returning. The long term recurrence rate is about one in five (20%). With this inflatable balloon technique, the studies show a rate of 4-17% recurrence over four years.

What are the disadvantages of this procedure?

Possible problems include pain if the balloon is too full, which could be relieved by letting out some of the liquid. Occasionally the doctor will find that the abscess appears unusual or complex and therefore surgery is needed under general anaesthetic to treat it properly.

Tell us what you think of this leaflet

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact the Secretary to Miss Dean, Consultant Gynaecology and Obstetrician, York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE, telephone 01904 721682 or the Secretary to Miss K Verma, Consultant Gynaecologist and Obstetrician, Scarborough Hospital, Woodlands Drive, Scarborough, YO12 6QL, telephone 01723 342515.

Teaching, training and research

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email yhs-tr.patientexperienceteam@nhs.net.

An answer phone is available out of hours.

Leaflets in alternative languages or formats

If you would like this information in a different format, including braille or easy read, or translated into a different language, please speak to a member of staff in the ward or department providing your care.

Patient Information Leaflets can be accessed via the Trust's Patient Information Leaflet website:
www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/your-visit/patient-information-leaflets/

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