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WORD Catheter for a Bartholin's cyst or abscess

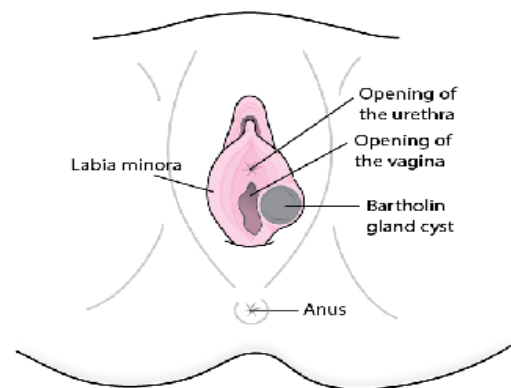
Patient Information Leaflet

What is a Bartholin's cyst or abscess?

Bartholin's Glands are located on each side of the entrance to the vagina at the 4 and 8 o'clock positions. The glands produce secretions during sexual arousal and these enter the vagina via a small duct on either side. When this duct becomes blocked, the gland can fill with mucus forming a fluid-filled cyst; if this becomes infected then an abscess occurs.

Symptoms include pain, swelling, discharge, pain during sexual intercourse and may be associated with a fever.

Management includes conservative options such as painkillers, compresses and warm baths. Sometimes antibiotics may be required if there is an infection, or abscess, which is not improving.



Saint John Department
of emergency medicine

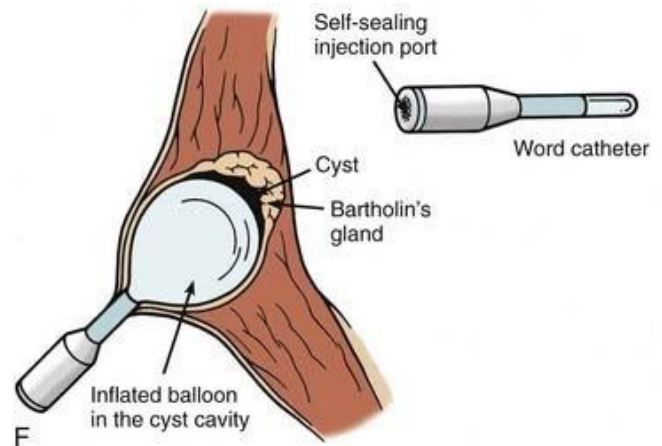
Where symptoms persist, the cyst or abscess can be treated surgically by a small cut into the inside aspect of the cyst and then drained, this is called an incision and drainage.

This can be done as a day case procedure in the hospital under a general anaesthetic. Sometimes the cyst or abscess edges are also stitched open to allow free drainage of the contents; this procedure is called marsupialisation.

An alternative to this procedure is the insertion of a WORD catheter into the cyst or abscess and this can be done in the outpatient department, which avoids the need for general anaesthesia and admission into hospital.

What is a WORD catheter and how does it work?

A WORD catheter is a small tube with a balloon at one end of it that is placed into the cyst or abscess to allow it to freely drain. It can be done in the outpatient department.



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- Local anaesthetic is applied to the site and a small incision or cut is made on the inner side.
- The contents is drained and a small swab may be taken to be sent to the microbiology laboratory. The cavity is then washed out.
- The WORD catheter tip is then inserted into the cavity and the balloon is inflated with water to keep it in place.
- The free end of the WORD catheter is placed inside the vagina where it can drain and be left in place for up to 4 weeks.

What happens after the procedure?

After the procedure you will be able to go home, provided you are comfortable. You may experience some pain where the catheter is over the next couple of days, therefore you can take painkillers if you wish. Sometimes we will also give you a course of antibiotics for one week.

As the free end of the catheter tip is in the vagina, it is likely that you will have some vaginal discharge on your underwear, therefore you may need to wear a sanitary pad or panty liner. This may continue for two weeks.

We will make an appointment to review you in our clinic in four weeks after insertion, to remove the catheter. It may fall out before then as it heals, however it

is important that you contact us if this happens as we may need to check that the cyst or abscess does not recollect. Following removal of the catheter, the skin edges will heal together approximately over the next five days.

A Bartholin abscess is usually caused by overgrowth of organisms that are normally present in the vagina, however occasionally it can be caused by a sexually transmitted infection. Women are therefore advised to have a sexual health screen at the sexual health clinic if they are sexually active and develop an abscess.

What can I do whilst the catheter is in place?

You are able to resume normal activities such as exercise and sexual intercourse, however we recommend that you avoid tampons, douching and swimming.

What are the advantages and disadvantages?

Insertion and removal of a WORD catheter can be done in the gynaecology outpatient department and does not require an admission to hospital or general anaesthetic. It is 97% successful, does not take long to do and women can resume normal activities soon after; hence this may be a more preferable choice to some.

Possible problems include difficulty with inserting the catheter, but this is rare. Occasionally the cyst or abscess may appear complex and the clinician may recommend that you instead have a procedure under general anaesthetic so that a small sample or biopsy can be taken and sent to the laboratory for analysis. Occasionally women may experience pain with the balloon in place, however this can be alleviated by removing some of the water in the balloon.

Following insertion, the WORD catheter may fall out. If this happens within the first week then the clinician will review you and discuss the option of re-inserting it. Rarely a small dissolvable stitch is needed to keep the catheter from falling out.

How likely is this going to occur again?

Regardless of which treatment option is used, a Bartholin's abscess can unfortunately occur again. Rates in the long term can go up to 20%. Specifically following treatment with a WORD catheter, recurrence rates are between 4-17% over 4 years.

Bartholin's abscesses can occur again, whatever treatment is used (the long term recurrence rate is about 1 in 5, or 20%). With this inflatable balloon technique the studies show a rate of 4–17% recurrences over 4 years.)

Whom can I contact if I have any questions or problems?

If you have any queries, you can contact us via the details below

**The Emergency Gynaecology Assessment Unit, Grange University Hospital,
Aneurin Bevan Health Board**

Tel: 01633 493557/ 01633 493556

**The Gynaecology Ambulatory Unit,
Nevill Hall Hospital, Aneurin Bevan Health Board**

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Address: Brecon Road, Abergavenny NP7 7EG

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Mae’r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg”.**