Before having a vulvar biopsy to diagnose or remove an abnormal area on your vulva, you need to know the possible benefits, risks, alternatives, warning signs, and special instructions. They are listed here for you and we are happy to answer your questions.

**What is a vulvar biopsy?**
A vulvar biopsy takes one or more small samples of tissue from the vulva, which includes the inner and outer lips (labia), the opening to the vagina, and the clitoris. Sometimes the area is first washed with a solution to highlight abnormal changes in the tissue. Then it may be viewed with a colposcope, which is like binoculars. Before the biopsy, numbing cream is often applied for 15 minutes or so, wiped off, antiseptic solution applied (let us know if you have a betadine or iodine allergy), and then numbing medicine is injected with a very small needle in the area where the sample will be taken. The sample (usually 3-4 mm, but sometimes larger) is taken by making a small cut on the skin. Often pressure and/or medicine is applied, and sometimes a suture is needed, to stop any bleeding.

The sample is sent to a lab and examined under a microscope by a pathologist. The test results are sent to Vermont Gynecology. We will contact you with the results and to make a plan.

**Reasons for vulvar biopsy**
Vulvar biopsy is done to find out why an area on the vulva looks abnormal. The cause could be non-cancerous, precancerous, or cancerous. Sometimes, the biopsy is also used to treat the abnormality. In such a case, the whole abnormal area is removed. That kind of excision usually removes a bigger area than a regular biopsy does.

**Benefits**
Biopsy is a more certain way than visual inspection to find out the cause of many conditions. More certain results can make for a better treatment plan. It also is an effective way to remove an abnormal area.

**Risks**
There may be a small scar. Rarely, there may be bleeding or infection. In very rare cases, test results will be wrong, since no exam or test is 100% accurate.

**Alternatives**
No other procedure can give you or your clinician the same information. Alternatives to a biopsy may include putting medicine on the area, cryotherapy (freezing), or electrocautery (burning). It is also always an option to decline a biopsy.

**How do I prepare for a vulvar biopsy?**
- If you are currently using any external vulvar creams or ointments, please discontinue use three days before your appointment.
- No pre-biopsy medications are necessary. However, you may take Ibuprofen/Advil and/or Tylenol/Acetaminophen about 60 minutes before the procedure to reduce discomfort.

**What will the biopsy feel like?**
Most women feel burning or stinging when the numbing medicine is given. There may be slight spotting (bleeding) from the area after the sample is taken, especially if more than one biopsy is taken.
After a vulvar biopsy

- Keep the area as clean and as dry as possible. Soaking in plain warm water for 10-20 minutes 2-3 times a day (sitz bath) will likely help the site heal and reduce risk for infection.
- Applying ice for 10 minutes twice per hour at first can reduce pain and swelling.
- You may shower or bathe as soon as you want, but avoid rubbing or applying soap to the area. Pat the area dry gently with a towel.
- Avoid irritating the area due to bike riding, genital sex, or other irritating activities for the first several days to let it heal.
- Do not apply antibiotic ointment unless instructed otherwise.

What treatment will I need?
The treatment will depend on the biopsy results. Sometimes no treatment is needed right now. If treatment is needed, we may be able to do it at Vermont Gynecology, either in the office or in an operating room; or we may refer you for other specialized care. If you are referred for further care, the responsibility for obtaining and paying for care is yours.

Warning Signs — Call Vermont Gynecology if you have:
- fever or chills
- more tenderness, redness, or swelling after the first 24 hours
- foul-smelling drainage from the area

Consent

I have read and understand the above information. I know it is my choice to have this procedure or not. I can change my mind at any time.

If there is an unexpected concern during the procedure, I request and authorize the clinician and Vermont Gynecology staff to do whatever is necessary to preserve my health and life.

I request that a person authorized by Vermont Gynecology provide appropriate evaluation and testing by performing vulvar biopsy(ies) as indicated.

For questions or concerns, please contact our office: 802-735-1252

AFTER HOURS EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBER: 802-350-1260