

Vulvectomy Surgery

This handout has information for patients requiring a vulvectomy, and can be used with the “Gynecologic Surgery – Information for Patients and Families” booklet.

What is a vulvectomy?

A vulvectomy is a surgery to remove parts, or all, of the vulva (female outer genitals). There are different types of vulvectomies, and your doctor will talk to you about the type you will have and will explain what will happen. For some surgeries, the surgeon may also need to remove nearby lymph nodes to test for cancer. If this is needed, the surgeon will make a separate incision in your groin area.

Staying comfortable:

The area around your incision can be tender and sensitive for weeks. To stay comfortable:

- Wear soft, loose clothing
- Avoid wearing underwear, but if you do, wear 100% cotton for good air flow
- Sit on a cushion or pillow

Moving around and doing leg exercises:

Your healthcare team will tell you how to position and move to protect your incision(s).

Healing time:

Sometimes healing is slow from pulling on the incision(s) with positioning and movement.

- This could mean you have to stay in hospital longer.
- Tell your nurse if you have concerns about caring for your incision(s) at home.

Caring for yourself if you have:

Dressings and Bandages	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your healthcare team will decide when to take these off.
Staples	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• These are used to hold your incision in place.• They will be taken out 7–14 days after surgery.• We will tell you where to go to get your staples taken out.
Drainage Tubes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• While you are in the hospital, the nurse will check and empty them.• The tubes are taken out when there is little to no drainage.• If you go home with drainage tubes, we will show you how to care for them.

Incision care instructions:

While in hospital, your nurse will clean your incision after the dressing is taken off. You will learn how to continue to clean and care for your incisions at home.

You will need:

- The spray bottle you used in the hospital
- A hand-held mirror
- A towel or other protective cover for your bed
- Warm tap water
- A hair dryer with low heat and low speed settings

Cleaning your incision:

- Clean your incision 2 times a day.
 - ☐ If you shower, this counts as 1 cleaning.
- Clean your perineum (the area between your vagina and anus) every time you pee or have a bowel movement if:
 - ☐ You have staples in.
 - ☐ Any incisions are open or leaking.

You might notice your urine sprays or goes in a different direction. Try sitting farther back on the toilet seat. You may have better control over the flow of your urine over time.

To clean your incision:	To dry your incision:
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Wash your hands.2. Fill the spray bottle with warm water.3. Sit on the toilet and spray your incision(s), aiming the stream down.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Make yourself comfortable on your bed with a protective covering under you.2. Dry the area(s) well, using your hair dryer on the low heat and low speed setting. This will take 10–15 minutes.3. Use a mirror to check your incision(s) for healing.

Follow Up Appointment

Your follow up appointment is booked based on your surgery and test results. This may be different depending on where your doctor is located.

- Calgary: You will see your doctor 6–8 weeks after your surgery.
- Edmonton: You will see your doctor 8–12 weeks after your surgery.

Your team will tell you what to watch for as your body heals and who to contact if needed before the appointment.

For other Cancer Care Alberta resources, visit cancercarealberta.ca

