Caring for yourself at home after your Vulvectomy

You must follow strict discharge instructions after your vulvectomy. Taking care of your surgical site and watching for problems are a vital part in healing well.

Care of your surgical site
Each time you urinate or have a bowel movement, you must rinse this area very well with warm water.
- Use the squirt bottle you were given. You need to gently pat dry with a soft towel to prevent any skin breakdown.
- Then, dry this area very well using a blow dryer. We suggest using a hair dryer for at least 5-10 minutes on the cool setting. This is simpler to do if you are lying down in bed.

What to Expect after Surgery
- You may feel pain or soreness at the surgical site.
- You may have a moderate amount of blood-tinged drainage for 1-2 weeks.
- If you have staples in your groin, these will be removed in 12-14 days at your return clinic visit.
- If you had drains placed you may clean the drain sites with mild soap and water daily to prevent any infection. Most drains will not be taken out before you go home. If you go home with drains, your nurse will teach you how to care for the drains and how to measure the drainage daily.
- You may have moderate swelling, drainage and/or bruising at the surgical site.
- You will go home with stitches in. They will dissolve slowly over time.
- You may have a change in the direction of your urine stream or it may spray in a way it didn't before. Most often, it will help if you sit further back on the toilet.
- It is not uncommon to have sitting restrictions after this surgery. Please discuss the details of these restrictions with your care team before discharge.

How to Prevent and Treat Constipation
If you are constipated and you are having nausea and vomiting, call the Gyn/Onc RN triage line/After Hours line at (608) 263-1548.

To Prevent Constipation
You may have trouble with bowel movements after you go home.
- Drink plenty of liquids.
- Avoid caffeine drinks as they may dehydrate you.
- Being up and about is helpful as well.
- Narcotic pain pills will cause constipation. Take a stool softener (Docusate Sodium/Colace®) 100 mg twice daily and Miralax® 17 gm once daily while on narcotics. You can buy this without a prescription at the drugstore.
Treating Constipation
If you have no bowel movement within 48 hours after leaving the hospital follow these instructions:

Have you had surgery on your bowels in the last month?
- **I don’t know** - Please contact the Gyn/Onc RN triage line/After Hours line at 608-263-1548 to review your records
- **Yes** - Increase Miralax® to twice daily dosing or take milk of magnesia 2-4 tablespoonsful
- **No** – Take a rectal suppository, like Dulcolax®. You should have a bowel movement within 4-6 hours.

When to call your Gyn/Onc Care Team
- If you have pain or soreness that is not relieved by pain medicine
- If you have swelling in your groin
- If your incision pulls apart or breaks down
- Redness or increasing tenderness around any of the incisions
- Pus-like (yellow, green or thick) or foul smelling drainage from the incisions
- Inability to tolerate food or liquid by mouth
- Pain or burning with urination
- Fever (by mouth) greater than 100.4°F
- Constipation—no bowel movement for greater than or equal to 3 days
- Increased shortness of breath

Phone Numbers

**Call 911 for emergencies**

If you have any questions or problems when you are home, please call:
Gynecology/Oncology Clinic:
(608) 263-1548

After hours and weekends, the clinic number will connect you with the paging operator. Ask for the gynecology resident on call. Give the operator your name and phone number with the area code. The doctor will call you back.

For clinic appointments call (608) 265-1700
Toll free phone number is 800-323-8942
Clinic fax number is (608) 263-2201

The Spanish version of this *Health Facts for You* is #7094.