Bartholin's Cyst And Abscess

You have a Bartholin's gland cyst. Bartholin's glands produce mucus through small openings just outside the opening of the vagina. The mucus helps with lubrication around the vagina during sexual intercourse. If the duct becomes clogged, the gland will swell and cause a bulge on the inside of the vagina. If this becomes big enough, it can be seen and felt on the outside of the vagina as well. Sometimes, the swelling will shrink away by itself. However, if the cyst becomes infected, the Bartholin's cyst fills with pus and becomes more swollen, red and painful and becomes a Bartholin's abscess. This usually requires antibiotic treatment and surgical drainage. Sometimes, with minor surgery under local anesthesia, a small tube is placed in the cyst or abscess wall. This allows continued drainage for up to 6 weeks. Minor surgery can make a new opening to replace the clogged duct and help prevent future cysts or abscess.

If the abscess occurs several times, a minor operation with local anesthesia is necessary to remove the Bartholin's gland completely or to make it drain better. Cutting open the gland and suturing the edges to make the opening of the gland bigger (*marsupialization*) may be needed and should usually be done by your obstetrician/gyncology physician. Antibiotics are usually prescribed for this condition. Take all antibiotics as prescribed. Make sure to finish them even if you are doing better. Take warm sitz baths for 20 minutes, 3 times a day. See your caregiver for follow-up care as recommended.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- There is increasing pain, swelling and/or redness near the vagina.
- There is vomiting or inability to tolerate medications.
- You have an oral temperature above 102° F (38.9° C).
- There is uncontrolled bleeding from the vagina.

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