What is Vulval Paget’s Disease?

Vulval Paget’s disease is an abnormal change in the cells which cover the skin (outer layer) of the vulva. Your vulva is the outer folds of skin around your vagina.

This may occur in patches (lesions) on your vulva.

Is this disease common?

No. Paget’s disease of the vulva is rare.

It usually only affects women who have been through the menopause.

What causes Vulval Paget’s disease?

We do not know the cause of Vulval Paget’s disease.

What are the symptoms of Vulval Paget’s disease?

You may have had symptoms for several years before seeking medical advice.

You may experience the following in the affected area:

- Itching (most common symptom) – can be a mild to intense itching of a lesion around your groin and/or skin around your vagina and anal area.
- Pain and bleeding may occur from scratching lesions that have been around for a long time.
- Thickened plaques (raised patch on the skin) may form that can become red, scaly and crusty. Although they may appear similar to eczema, they fail to clear up with the use of steroid creams.

Can there be any complications from Vulval Paget’s disease?

Yes.

Vulval Paget’s disease is most often an in-situ tumour (abnormal growth of tissue in the local area) of the sweat glands in the vulva.

However, Vulval Paget’s disease may be associated with an underlying cancer, either in the vulval area, or more widespread within the body (invasive cancer).
How is Vulval Paget's disease diagnosed?

Diagnosis is made by:

- Removing a small piece of tissue (biopsy) under local anaesthetic, which is then sent to the laboratory and examined under a microscope.
- The biopsy is performed to confirm the diagnosis and exclude other conditions.
- Investigations to search for nearby cancers may also be done.

What is the treatment for Vulval Paget's disease?

Vulval Paget's disease can be treated in several ways and often several treatments are used. Your doctor will discuss these with you and advise which treatment(s) are recommended for you.

- Surgery is the most common treatment. The lesion and a wide margin of clear tissue surrounding the area is removed during the operation (wide local excision).
- Photodynamic therapy is currently being studied. A cream is applied to the skin which makes the Paget's cells sensitive to light; then a specific wave length of light is applied to the area.
- Imiquimod cream applied to the skin.
- Radiotherapy may also be used to treat Vulval Paget's disease.

Is there anything I can do to help myself?

The following may help;

- Avoid scented soap/shower gels that may irritate the skin around your vulva
- Wear cotton underwear

Can Vulval Paget's disease be cured?

It is not unusual for Paget's disease of the vulva to come back again. Therefore, you will be carefully followed up and seen regularly by your Gynaecologist for the long term.

How often will I need to attend clinic?

You will attend the clinic and be re-examined every 3 months for 2 years after your initial diagnosis.
After 2 years, follow ups every year are recommended.
You will be given or sent your appointments to attend the Gynaecology Out Patients Clinic.

Who can I contact if I have any questions?

If you need any further information, please do not hesitate to contact the Vulval Clinic Secretary:

- 0114 226 8300