

# Bartholin Cyst or Abscess



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY  
WEXNER MEDICAL CENTER

## About the Bartholin gland

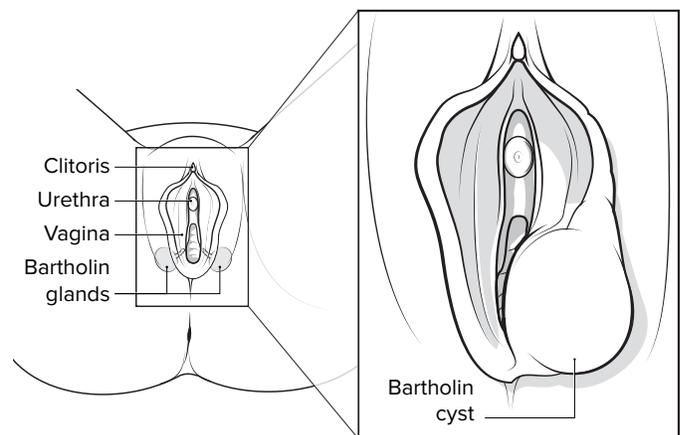
The Bartholin glands lubricate the vagina. There is one on each side of the labia, which are the large skin folds on each side of the vagina. This gland releases fluid through a passage, called a duct, into the vagina.

## Causes of a Bartholin cyst or abscess

A cyst is caused when the duct opening gets clogged. The fluid is not able to get out, which causes a lump.

When the gland becomes infected, it is called an abscess and may cause pain. An abscess is sometimes caused by sexually transmitted infections, such as gonorrhea. It also may occur with an injury to the vaginal area.

Sometimes the cause for a cyst or abscess is not known.



## Signs of a cyst or abscess

If you have any of these signs, see your doctor for treatment:

- Swelling or a lump near the opening of the vagina
- Cloudy, brown, or yellow drainage when pressure is put on the lump
- Pain when walking, sitting or having sex
- Fever, but this is a less common sign

## Treatment

Treatment may depend on how large the cyst is or whether you have an abscess. Your treatment may include:

- Placing warm moist towels on the vaginal area
- Sitting in warm water, not hot, without soap
- Taking medicine, called antibiotics, to fight infection
- Draining the gland in the doctor's office or clinic
- Removing the cyst or abscess with surgery

## To drain a cyst

Sometimes, the cyst needs to be opened and the fluid drained out.

- With your feet in metal stirrups, the area between your legs will be cleaned with an antiseptic soap, called Betadine, and water. This soap may temporarily make your skin yellow.
- You may be given a numbing medicine or pain medicines to feel comfortable during the procedure.
- Your doctor will open the cyst to allow the fluid to come out. A small tube called a catheter may be placed into the cyst to help it drain. The catheter stays in place for several weeks. The doctor will remove it at a follow up visit. If it falls out before your follow up visit, that is okay.
- There is a chance that you may bleed or get an infection. These problems are often easy to treat with medicines.

## Follow-up care

It is important to see your doctor to make sure you are healing well after treatment.

- Schedule a follow up appointment with your doctor.
- After treatment, if your pain gets worse or you have a fever with a temperature of 100 degrees or higher, call your doctor. If your doctor cannot be reached, you need to be seen by a doctor in a care center or emergency room.
- Do not have sex until your doctor has said that you can.
- If you had an infection passed on by sexual intercourse, do not have sex until both you and your partner have finished your treatment for that infection.

## Prevention tips

- Use good personal cleanliness, such as wiping front to back after a bowel movement.
- Do not use vaginal sprays, deodorant, or douches.
- Wear loose fitting cotton underwear.
- Avoid wearing tight panty hose or pants.
- Use a condom to prevent the spread of sexually transmitted infections.

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**Talk to your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.**

For more health information, contact the Library for Health Information at **614-293-3707** or e-mail **health-info@osu.edu**.