What is a Bartholin’s duct cyst?
You have two Bartholin’s glands. They are on each side of the opening to the vagina. They are about the size of a pea. They make the fluid that lubricates the vagina when you’re sexually excited or aroused. Each one has a tiny tube called a duct. It carries fluid from the gland to the vagina. Sometimes a duct gets blocked, the fluid backs up, and the gland swells up. This is called a cyst.

What are the symptoms?
There may be a round swelling or bump in one of the lips. It can grow to the size of a golf ball. It may not be tender, but it can become very painful if it gets infected. Walking may become uncomfortable if that happens.

An infected cyst is also called an abscess. It’s usually caused by normal bacteria that live on the skin or in the vagina. Sometimes the infection is caused by a sexually transmitted bacteria that needs to be treated. We’ll test you to make sure.

Before getting treatment for a Bartholin’s duct cyst, you need to know the most common benefits, risks, side effects, and other choices you have. We are happy to answer any questions you have.

How is a Bartholin’s duct cyst treated?
There are different ways to treat a Bartholin’s duct cyst. Treatments are done by a doctor or nurse. Some may not be available here. Your doctor or nurse will help you decide which method is best for you based on the size of the cyst, how much pain you’re having, and if it is infected.

What are the treatments?
- Incision and Drainage (I&D) — We inject a small amount of numbing medicine into the area. We make a small cut into the cyst. It lets the fluid drain out. Sometimes, we put gauze packing into the cut.
  - This is a quick way to treat a Bartholin’s cyst.
  - This is easy to do, but the cyst often builds up again.
- Word Catheter — Word catheters are small rubber tubes. The catheter is placed into the cyst after the I&D.
  - You leave it in place for at least four weeks. This lets the fluid drain out and a new duct to form that isn’t blocked.
  - You may notice the end of the tube that sticks out. If it bothers you, gently push it inside your vagina.
  - You may be asked to soak in a warm tub (sitz bath) or apply warm compresses each day until your next office visit.
  - Using a catheter is more effective than only doing I&D, but sometimes a cyst forms again after the catheter is removed. Then it has to be treated again.
  - Sometimes the catheter falls out too soon. Then it has to be replaced.
  - Don’t have vaginal intercourse until the catheter is removed. If you do, it can be pushed out of place.
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TREATMENT OF BARTHOLIN’S DUCT CYST OR ABSCESS

- Use a panty-liner or mini-pad to keep drainage from staining your clothing.

**Marsupialization** — Marsupialization is another way to make a new duct to drain the cyst. It is a minor surgical procedure. A numbing medicine is injected into the area, or you are given a general anesthesia to make you sleep. A cut is made through the skin and the wall of the cyst. The new duct is made by stitching the edges of the cuts together.

- It is often done in a surgical center, but it can be done in some clinics.
- Gauze packing may be placed into the cyst. It is usually removed in a few days.
- Use a panty-liner or mini-pad to keep drainage from staining your clothing.
- Most people have mild discomfort for a few days after marsupialization. Take ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®, Aleve®), acetaminophen (Tylenol®), or whatever prescription medication your clinician prescribes.
- You may be asked to soak in a warm tub (sitz baths) or to apply warm compresses every day, until your next office visit.
- You may start having vaginal intercourse when you feel comfortable again.
- Marsupialization is very effective, but sometimes a new duct closes up and a cyst forms again.

What other choices do I have?
Sometimes, treatment isn’t necessary — the doctor or nurse will simply check the cyst regularly to make sure it’s not growing. Other times, you will be asked to soak the area in the shower, a tub of water (sitz bath), or with a warm, moist towel to see if it will drain on its own. You may also be given antibiotics.

We can talk about any of these options with you and help you with whatever you decide to do.

How can I keep from getting another Bartholin’s Gland Cyst?
No treatment is 100 percent effective. A cyst or abscess may come back even after using a Word catheter or marsupialization. If it does come back, it can be treated again. It’s best to return for care as soon as you think the cyst has returned.

What else do I need to know?
No promise can be made about the outcome of your treatment. In the unlikely event that you need emergency medical care that cannot be provided at Planned Parenthood, you will be responsible for paying for it. This is the case even if Planned Parenthood sends you to a hospital because of a problem.

**Your health is important to us.** If you have any questions or concerns, please call us. We are happy to help you.
Call us right away at Orange 714-922-4122 or San Bernardino 909-915-2076 if you have:

- A fever of 100.4°F or higher that lasts more than four hours
- Swelling that increases or does not go down in three days
- Redness or swelling that spreads beyond the immediate area of the cyst
- Pain that is not relieved by acetaminophen or ibuprofen

Signature of Patient (and person authorized to sign for patient when required)  Date

Relationship to Patient: □ self □ parent □ legal guardian □ other  

I witness that the patient received this information, said it was read and understood, and there was an opportunity to ask questions.

Signature of Witness  Date