

Information leaflet on

Vulval Intraepithelial Neoplasia 'VIN'



By your side

What is wrong with me?

You have been found to suffer from Vulval Intraepithelial Neoplasia or VIN. This is an uncommon skin condition, which affects women. It most commonly affects the vulva but may also affect the area around the back passage. VIN is grades as 1, 2 or 3 depending on how abnormal the skin looks under the microscope. Type 1 is mildly abnormal whereas 3 is more abnormal.

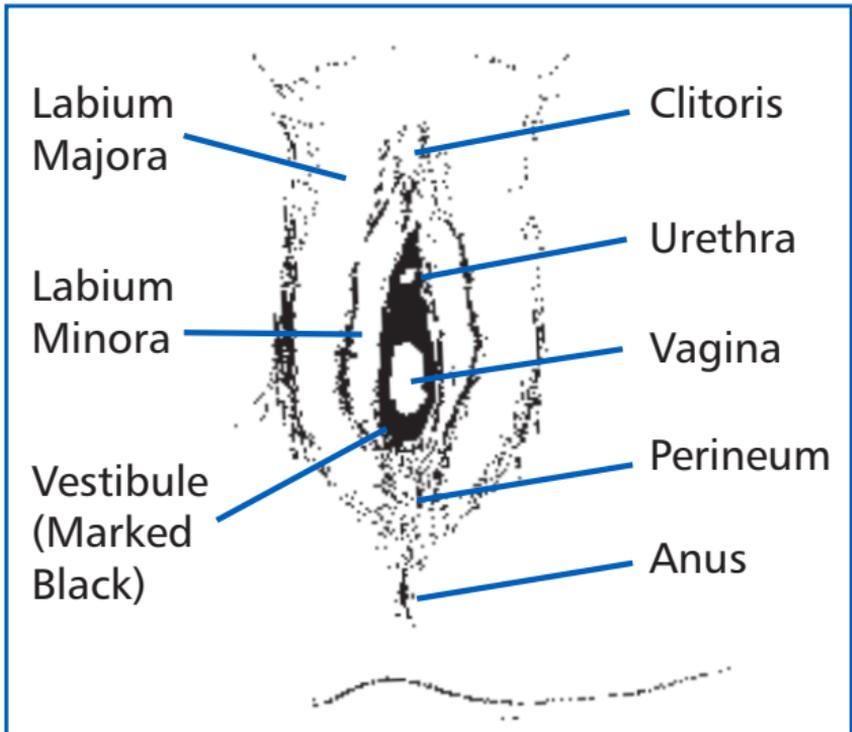
What to do you mean by the vulva?

The vulva is the skin around the front passage (see diagram opposite).

What causes it?

VIN is becoming more common particularly in young women. We now know that it is caused by a skin infection called Humanpapilloma virus or HPV. HPV is a common virus, which is carried by men and women, and is most commonly transmitted by sex. At any one time, up to 40% of women may carry HPV. Most people are able to fight off HPV infection although it can take many months to do so. Other people (such as yourself) find this harder to do. HPV interferes with normal skin growth.

The Vulva



How is it diagnosed?

VIN can have many different appearances, which makes diagnosis difficult. Patients may only be diagnosed after months or years of suffering. Biopsy (taking a small piece of skin for examination) is the only reliable method. This may be done in the clinic with local anaesthetic or may need a general anaesthetic depending on how big the biopsy needs to be.

What are the symptoms?

There may be no symptoms. However, most women complain of itching, burning and painful sex.

Why is it important?

VIN is important for 2 reasons:

- It can cause very bad discomfort.
- It may **rarely** turn cancerous. The risk of it turning cancerous is unknown but has been estimated at 5 per 100 cases.

How is it treated?

Unfortunately we have no effective cure for VIN. We sometimes operate on VIN if:

- We need to confirm the diagnosis.
- Your symptoms are unbearable.
- We are worried it may be turning cancerous.

Usually we just keep a close watch on the skin and occasionally offer creams to ease the soreness. Sometimes we are trying experimental treatments. Ask the doctor you see in the clinic about this.

Sometimes VIN gets better with no treatment.

Is there anything else I can do?

One of the most important things you can do is stop smoking (if you do smoke). Cigarette smoke harms your immune system, which means you're less likely to fight off the infection.

What about my sexual partner?

You do not need to take any special precautions. VIN although caused by an infection cannot be spread to other men or women.

What else do I need to know?

Women with VIN are more likely to have abnormal smears. Because of this, your doctor may recommend you have smears more often than every 3 years.

You will be reviewed on a regular basis at the hospital clinic to check on your progress and make sure there are no problems.

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