What is a Bartholin’s abscess?
A Bartholin’s abscess is an infection that results from blockage of the duct draining the Bartholin’s gland; a gland found in your vagina that adds secretions to the vagina. The procedures used to treat a Bartholin’s abscess involve creating a new drainage area from that gland. This may be done with a local anesthetic or sometimes in an operating room with general anesthetic.

What to expect after a Bartholin’s gland procedure:

Pain
Your labia may be slightly painful and remain swollen for several weeks, depending on the size of the abscess that was drained. A small specialized catheter may be inserted to help drain the abscess. It should remain in place for up to three to four weeks. If it falls out do not be concerned. Alternatively a small gauze may be placed in the abscess. This can be removed by yourself the next day after the procedure. See your doctor right away if the pain or swelling worsens. Your doctor may give you a prescription for pain medication if necessary, or you may relieve pain with Extra Strength Tylenol® or Ibuprofen/Advil®. Ten minute warm tub soaks, twice or three times a day, will also relieve the pain and swelling.

Personal Hygiene
For the next two to three weeks, it is very important to pay extra attention to your personal hygiene, because you are at a high risk for infection. Here are some “do’s” and “don’ts”.

Do:
1. Shower or bathe carefully every day with a mild soap. Rinse your perineum with plain, clean water and gently pat dry. Use your hand held hair blower, on a low setting, to thoroughly dry the area.
2. Wipe yourself from front (urethra) to back (anus) after a bowel movement or passing urine.
3. Wear clean, natural fibre, cotton underwear instead of silky, synthetic panties.
4. While generally we advise to abstain from intercourse for three weeks while healing, when you begin to have sex again it is advisable to urinate before and after intercourse. Also, encourage the use of a condom by a new male partner or by all your partners, if you have more than one.
Do Not:
1. Do not douche.
2. Do not use any vaginal suppositories, medications or deodorants unless specifically advised to do so by your doctor.
3. Do not use bubble bath, bath oils or highly perfumed bath products. This is good everyday advice, but particularly important after a Bartholin’s abscess has been drained.
4. Do not wear tight-fitting clothing around the genital area. This will cause friction, decrease circulation and invite infection.

Your Next Menstrual Period
Your next menstrual period should occur at the usual time. You must use a pad, not a tampon. Two periods from now, you may resume use of a tampon as long as you have never had a “Staph Aureus” pelvic infection. When you resume use of a tampon, read tampon labels and instructions for insertion and removal. Do not use tampons in between periods or on very light days, as this may cause injury to the vaginal lining. Do not leave a tampon in for more than four hours.

Birth Control and Sexual Intercourse
It is possible to become pregnant once intercourse is resumed. You may also resume intercourse after three weeks or as advised by your physician. Also resume your birth control as advised by your physician. After you have not been sexually active for a few weeks, it may be necessary to use a water-soluble lubricant and change intercourse positions more often. (Do not use Vaseline® petroleum jelly, hand lotions or massage lotions). It may be best to ask your pharmacist for assistance in selecting a lubricant. Avoid intercourse if you experience pelvic pain, vaginal discharge, itching or burning with urination and see your doctor as soon as possible.

Be Sure to:
- Keep your follow-up appointment with your physician or clinic
- Go for yearly pelvic examinations and pap smears