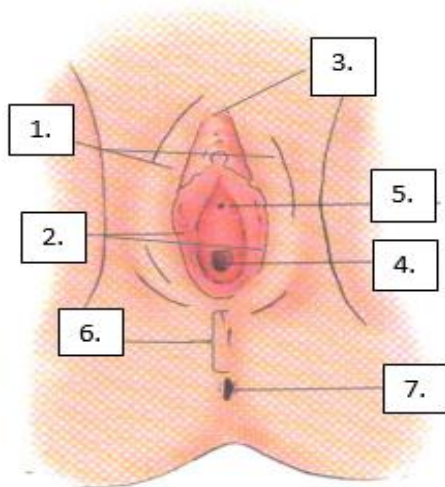


Vulvar cancer surgery

You have been scheduled for a vulvar surgery. The surgery has been planned specifically for your needs, depending on the size of the tumor and if and how it has spread.

Anatomy of the vulva



Vulva consist of the external female sex organs. These include

1. labia majora
2. labia minora
3. clitoris

In addition, the following structures are located around the vulva:

4. opening of the vagina
5. urethra
6. perineum
7. anus

Preparing for the surgery

Preparing for the surgery starts at home. Read more on [Preparing for a gynecological surgical procedure](#).

Arrive at the hospital according to the instructions in your appointment letter, usually the day before the operation. Blood samples may be taken on the day you arrive. At the ward, you will meet the doctor who will perform your procedure, and, if necessary, an anesthesiologist.

A sentinel lymph node mapping procedure, where the lymph nodes around the pelvic area are located and scanned, is also usually carried out. For more information, please read [Gynekologisen syövän vartijaimusolmukkeen gammakuvaus](#) (in Finnish).

The surgery

The surgery is usually carried out under spinal anesthesia. During the surgery, a urinary catheter is placed. A drain to remove fluid from the surgery area may be placed as well.

After the procedure at the hospital

After the operation is over, your recovery is observed at the recovery unit. Appropriate pain management and anti-nausea medication is always a part of a surgical procedure, and it starts with a premedication before the surgery. The urinary catheter and drain will stay in place for a few days, depending on the extent of the surgery. Normal urination is usually possible after the catheter has been removed.

You can eat and drink normally after the surgery. Getting up as soon as you can promotes recovery and the return of normal bowel functions, and decreases the risk of developing blood clots. You should move as much as you can, but remember to rest as well.

You must spray the operation area with water every time you use the bathroom and let the area breathe several times a day to ensure that the wound area does not become infected. A doctor may prescribe a course of antibiotics to prevent infection.

The length of your hospital stay may vary depending on the extent of the surgery.

At home after the surgery

You will receive individualized homecare instructions as well as a copy of [After a gynecologic cancer surgery](#).

The length of the **sick leave** depends on the extent of the surgery. Recovery varies from person to person, and we recommend that you give your body the time it needs to heal.

Surgery's effects on sex life

After the procedure the appearance of the vulva will change. However, the tissues around the surgical area are very adaptable, and usually the cosmetic outcome after the recovery period is good. Sensation during intercourse can change if the clitoris is removed during the surgery. You can discuss how the surgery will affect your sexual life with the doctor treating you and / or with a sexual counsellor.