

## Sexual intercourse

- Avoid intercourse when you have symptoms or pain in the genitals.
- Natural lubrication is best but make sure the area is well lubricated.
- Avoid artificial lubricants such as 'KY' jelly or petroleum jelly.
- If using condoms, also use a lubricant.
- Urinate (to help prevent infection) and rinse the vulva with cool water after sexual intercourse.

## Physical activities

- Avoid activities that put direct pressure on the vulva, such as riding a bicycle or horseback riding.
- Limit intense exercises that create a lot of friction in the vulval area. Walking is a good alternative as an exercise.
- Remove exercise clothing promptly.
- Use a soft cloth (soaked in a bowl with cool water and your soap substitute) and apply to the vulval area to help relieve the itch.
- Avoid hot tubs. For a bath/shower, the water temperature should be warm and **not** hot.
- Try to avoid swimming, otherwise remove wet swimwear promptly afterwards.
- Avoid long periods of sitting - try to have periods of standing or walking e.g. stand to talk on the phone when at work.

## Important points on the use of medication

- Only use medication on the genitals that has been prescribed for this area because skin in the genital area is more sensitive than skin elsewhere on the body.
- If a flare of symptoms occurs, consider going to your GP for a swab for culture (looking for thrush or other infection) before medication is prescribed. Even medications designed to treat genital infections may irritate the area in some women and make diagnosis of other conditions more difficult.

Reference - RCH Melbourne Aus.

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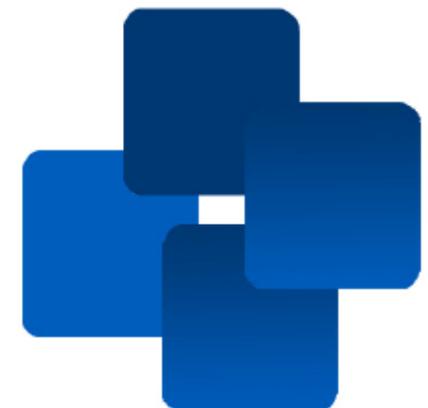
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# Vulvovaginitis

## Adolescents and Young Women

### Patient Information Leaflet



## Introduction

The purpose of this information leaflet is to advise on vulva skin care for adolescents and young women to manage the symptoms of vulvovaginitis (*pronounced: Vul-vo-vaj-ee-night-is*).

### What are the signs and symptoms of vulvovaginitis?

Vulvovaginitis is inflammation or irritation of the vagina and vulva (the opening of the vagina). The symptoms of Vulvovaginitis are often:

- Itching in the vaginal area
- Some discharge from the vagina
- Redness of the skin between the labia majora (outside lips of the vagina)
- Burning or stinging when passing urine

Occasional itching around the vulval (genital) area can be common in adolescents and young women which can cause some pain as a result of irritation to the skin in the area. The symptoms are usually not serious and improve naturally. Often young women attribute these symptoms to a 'thrush' infection. However, there are many other possible reasons for the symptoms. Thrush is very uncommon in young women. If treatment for thrush does not work, the young woman may try many other treatments. It can be very disheartening when these also do not work.

Here are some ways young women can try to reduce their symptoms through hygiene, clothing and other simple changes to lifestyle. If after using these suggestions the symptoms persist, please see your family doctor.

### What causes vulvovaginitis?

Some things that can cause vulvovaginitis are moisture/dampness around the vulva which is made worse by tight clothing and obesity. Irritants such as soap residue, bubble baths and antiseptics etc.

## Treatment

In most mild cases, no treatment or tests are needed. In cases where it is troublesome, the doctor may advise a swab of the area to be taken for testing, but the results are not always helpful. If you have a more severe case of vulvovaginitis, blood stained discharge, or other skin problems, you may be referred to a specialist for further management.

### Care at home

Firstly, try not to worry. This is a normal but common problem for adolescents and young women and will improve as you get older. Try avoiding the things that make Vulvovaginitis worse:

- Wear loose cotton underwear and avoid tight trousers/jeans etc.
- Check your weight is within the healthy range and get some advice if you think you may be overweight for your height.
- While there are symptoms, avoid using antiseptics in the bath and scented hygiene products such as feminine wipes, bubble bath and soap – an emollient is a good substitute for soap. Make sure it is rinsed well from the vulva.
- Some people find vinegar baths helpful - add 1/2 cup white vinegar to a shallow bath and soak for 10 to 15 minutes. Do this daily for a few days and see if it helps you.
- Soothing creams (e.g. soft paraffin, Bepanthen) may help settle the soreness and waterproof and protect the skin from the discharge which can be irritating.

You may have to repeat these simple measures if the problem comes back.

### Key points to remember

Mild vulvovaginitis is a common problem in adolescents and young women. It may recur now and then but will improve. In most mild cases, no treatment or tests are needed.