

Care of the Vulva

Information and advice for patients

Gynaecology

What is the vulva?

The vulva is the external genital skin in women. Vulval skin is very sensitive and can easily become sore from irritants. There are measures that can be taken to protect the skin:

Washing

- Avoid soaps and perfumed products, including feminine wipes. Using a soap substitute can be soothing and helps to prevent dryness.
- When using shampoo, try to avoid it coming into contact with the vulva. An option is to wash hair in a basin.
- Do not be tempted to over-wash; this can in fact make symptoms worse. Clean the vulva once a day. Showers are preferable to baths, and avoid sponges or flannels. It is important to dry the area properly, either patting the area with a soft towel or using a hairdryer on a cool setting held well away from the skin.

Clothing

- Wear loose fitting cotton or silk underwear.
- Wear loose fitting clothes and avoid leggings, tight jeans and tights.
- Sleep without underwear.
- Avoid biological and fragranced washing powders and fabric conditioners.
- After washing underwear use a rinse cycle with water only.

Irritants

- Avoid wearing panty liners or sanitary towels on a regular basis. If periods are a problem ask your doctor for possible treatments. There are options of cotton sanitary pads and tampons.
- Seek help from your doctor if you are forced to wear incontinence pads for leaking urine.
- Avoid coloured toilet tissue.

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Further information

Vulval Pain Society

www.vulvalpainsociety.org

British Association of Dermatologists

www.bad.org.uk

(Websites accessed 11th July 2023).

Contact details

If you have any questions please phone our clinic to speak to one of our nurses.

City Hospital

0121 507 4246

Sandwell General Hospital

0121 507 3249

Sources used for the information in this leaflet

Nunns, D., & Murphy, R. (2012). Assessment and management of vulval pain. *Bmj*, 344.

British Association for Sexual Health and HIV (2014) 2014 UK National Guideline on the Management of Vulval Conditions. Available at: <http://www.bashh.org/documents/UK%20national%20guideline%20for%20the%20management%20of%20vulval%20conditions%202014.pdf> (Accessed 11th July 2023).

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