

General Vulvar Care

Basic guidelines:

Keep the vulva dry

Put nothing on the vulva (e.g., clothes, powders, creams)

DO:

- Wear only cotton underwear.
- Sleep without underwear.
- Take Aveeno baths (the store brand generics of colloidal oatmeal are fine).
- Use no soap or only gentle Basis soap for bathing vulvar area.
- Wash underwear in Cheer-free or Dreft detergent and run a second rinse cycle. Always wash new underwear before wearing them.
- After being treated for an infection, you should one time “sterilize” your underwear by using a little bleach and very hot water.
- Use tampons with the string tucked into the vagina
- Use unscented tampons or pads.
- Use a blow dryer on low setting after bathing to get the external vulvar area fully dry. NEVER use the blow dryer internally (vaginally).
- Take panty hose off as soon as you can at the end of your day. (Wear panty hose infrequently).
- Take wet swimsuits and sweaty work out clothes off just as soon as you possible can.
- Consider using a different form of contraception if the spermicide associated with condoms or the diaphragm is creating an allergic reaction, or irritation for you.
- Use a water-soluble lubricant like K.Y. Jelly, astroglide, or Replens.
- Some women are sensitive or allergic to salivary secretions (with oral sex) or semen fluids thus you may need to put a little Basis soap on your finger and gently reach inside your vagina to wipe away any left over fluids, then in the same way rinse away the soap.
- Wash your genital area with only plain water. To wash away any vaginal secretions that may cause irritation. Rinse with clear water from a squeeze bottle after urinating.

DON'T:

- Don't wear synthetic or nylon underwear.
- Don't wear tight fitting pants or jeans (seams rubbing on the skin causes irritation).
- Don't use perineal pads or wipes.
- Don't use powders or scented creams or perfume in the vulvar area.
- Don't use bubble bath or perfumed bath beads or oils.
- Don't use scented soaps or detergents.
- Don't use Mineral oil, or vegetable oils for lubricants.
- Minimize activities that causes the vulvar area to remain wet.
- Don't use Bounce or any other fabric softener with your underwear.
- Don't use Steroid creams (Cortaid, hydrocortisone etc.) unless a physician prescribes one of them and always stop them when advised.
- For some woman, oral sex can cause vulvar irritation because the saliva contains an enzyme called amylase that causes skin irritation. If that's true for you, minimize oral sex.

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This handout provides a general overview on this topic and may not apply to everyone. To find out if this handout applies to you and to get more information on this subject, talk to your family doctor.

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