



Prepubertal Vulvovaginitis

What is vulvovaginitis?

Vulvovaginitis is an inflammation or irritation of the genital area. It is common in young girls because they have less estrogen and their vulvar skin is normally thinner than adults.

Girls may experience:

- Redness
- Itching
- Vaginal discharge
- Vaginal bleeding
- A stinging or burning feeling, often with urinating (peeing).

How might health care provider diagnose vulvovaginitis?

Your provider may ask questions to learn about how and when the symptoms started, how it has changed, and what makes it better or worse. They may also do a physical examination of the genital region and check for infection. An internal exam is not usually needed. An ultrasound of the pelvis and rarely a biopsy of the skin may be helpful in certain situations.

What Causes Vulvovaginitis?

The vulvar area is similar to skin in other parts of the body and can be irritated by clothing or allergies to detergents or soaps. Infections of the vulva and vagina may occur from bacteria (streptococcus or others), fungus (yeast) as well as infections of the body such as chicken-pox and measles. Hygiene problems such as poor wiping after bowel movements, or chronic constipation or diarrhea can also lead to vulvovaginitis. Pinworms can also cause these symptoms. Skin conditions that affect other parts of the body can also affect this area. Foreign bodies that some young girls put in their vagina (like small bits of toilet paper) can also cause this problem.

What can you do to improve Vulvovaginitis?

- It often gets better without treatment
- Use cotton underwear
- Wear loose-fitting clothing
- Use a mild, unscented soap or just water to clean the vulva and dry the area thoroughly and gently
- Avoid irritating substances like bubble baths, fabric softeners and detergents with perfumes or colors
- Avoid sitting in wet, tight underwear or bathing suits for long periods of time
- Urinate with the legs spread apart
- Wipe from front to back
- Apply a protective ointment recommended by your provider
- Use the medication that your provider gives you if they say that you have an infection or skin condition and follow up with your provider as needed
- Symptoms usually improve as puberty approaches