



## Vulvar Aphthous Ulcers

### What are vulvar aphthous ulcers?

Vulvar aphthous ulcers are lesions, like uncovered blisters, that form on the vulva (structures surrounding the vaginal opening). They are similar to the “canker sores” you can get in your mouth but can be quite deep and large. They are most commonly found on the inner surface of the labia minora (inner “lips” around the vaginal opening) and are often on both labia.

These ulcers are not thought to be an infection, but in some cases may be triggered by another viral illness in your body such as influenza or mononucleosis (also known as “mono” or Epstein Barr Virus). Stress on your immune system from these infections may cause the ulcers to form.

Your healthcare provider may swab the ulcer and send it for culture to rule out an infectious cause or complication.

### What are common symptoms?

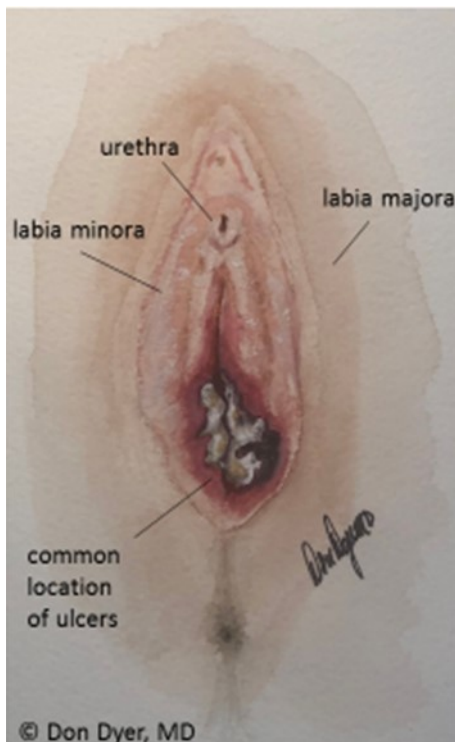
Many patients feel ill for a few days before the ulcers appear, with cough, sore throat, achiness or low-grade fever. They may develop some discomfort in the vulvar area and may notice red/purple blisters forming. The blisters then open and can be very painful. They are often larger and deeper than ulcers caused by the herpes virus. The labia can sometimes become quite swollen, as well. After a few days, a scab may form over the ulcer.

Vaginal discharge (clear, white, yellow or brown) is very common.

Most ulcers heal within 7-14 days.

If you have recurrent episodes of both oral and vulvar ulcers that are present at the same time, you should let your healthcare provider know.

If you find it painful to urinate, you can try urinating in a sitz bath of warm water or use a squirt bottle of water to dilute the urine. If you are unable to urinate at all, you should let your healthcare provider know right away.



### How are vulvar aphthous ulcers treated?

Supportive measures are often used to help with pain, speed up healing, and prevent scarring:

- Oral pain medications (ibuprofen, naproxen, acetaminophen)
- Topical lidocaine gel (numbing gel)
- Sitz baths to clean area and for comfort (sit in plain warm water in your bathtub for 10-15 minutes)
- A topical steroid ointment and/or a course of oral steroids may be recommended to help speed up healing.
- Antibiotics are not effective for treating vulvar aphthous ulcers