



Genital Trauma

Straddle Injury

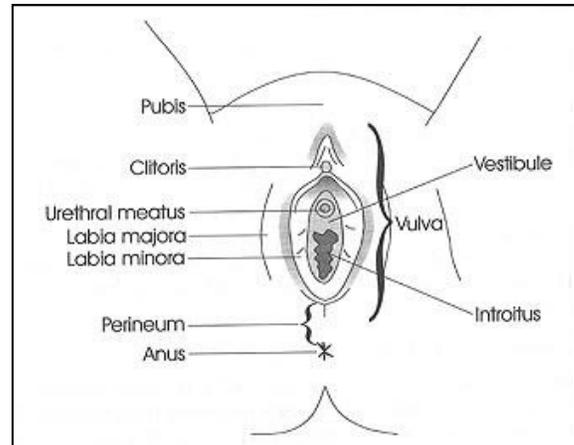
The most common cause of vulvar trauma in children results from accidental falls on objects, commonly referred to as straddle injuries. Items causing straddle injury include arms of chairs, playground equipment, bathtubs, and bicycle cross bars.

Most straddle injuries do not extend inside the vagina but instead involve the external parts of the genitalia (the vulva). The areas most commonly injured include the clitoris, labia majora, labia minora and perineum (see picture). Most commonly, injuries result in superficial skin lacerations (cut), bleeding and bruises. Depending on their location, small lacerations may not require stitches. Deeper or larger lacerations may require repair with stitches in an emergency department, healthcare office, or operating room.

Vaginal Trauma

A laceration through the hymen or into the vaginal opening suggests that a deeper injury may be present inside the vagina. For your child's comfort and to adequately visualize the injury, we recommend this evaluation occur under sedation in an emergency room or in an operating room setting.

Genital Anatomy



Vulvar Hematoma

Hematomas can result from trauma to the vulva, generally through falling on a hard object. Hematomas are the result of bleeding underneath the skin and look like a bruise with swelling. Your healthcare provider will evaluate the hematoma to make sure it isn't getting larger. Treatment includes cold packs to reduce swelling and pain medications such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen. Sometimes swelling or pain makes urination difficult. If your child is unable to urinate, you should notify your healthcare provider.

Most hematomas will resolve on their own and do not require surgery. Surgery is recommended if the hematoma is growing rapidly in size or if your child shows signs that additional bleeding is occurring.

At Home Care after Genital Trauma

Keep the genitalia clean by having your child sit in a bath of plain, warm water for at least 5-10 minutes daily. After the bath, pat the vulva dry gently with a towel or allow it to air dry.

If you do not have access to a bathtub, you can use a hand-held shower head or squirt bottle to gently rinse the vulva daily.

If your child has pain with urination, you can try urinating in a warm water bath or while spraying warm water on the vulva with a squirt bottle. If your child is unable to urinate at all, you should call your healthcare provider.

For pain, your healthcare provider will instruct you regarding appropriate dosage of acetaminophen and/or ibuprofen. Applying a cold pack or ice pack wrapped in a cloth to the vulva will help with pain and swelling.

If bleeding continues or becomes heavier at home, or if a hematoma is becoming larger, you should call your healthcare provider for advice.

If your child develops a fever or you notice spreading redness of the skin, you should call your healthcare provider.

Follow up with your healthcare provider as directed so they may assess for proper healing of the injury.

Genital Burns

Burns to the vulva can be serious and should be evaluated immediately by a healthcare provider, typically in the emergency room.

The most common causes include scald from hot water or other liquids, flame, wax from candles or hair removal wax, chemical burns like hair removal cream, and electrical burns.

Initial treatment includes cleansing, gently removing dead skin, treatment with antibiotic ointments, application of protective dressings and close monitoring to prevent urine and stool from contaminating the area. Some burns may require surgery and/or hospitalization.

Insect Bites

Local pain, itching and redness often develop after an insect bite. Young children can develop significant swelling around the site of the bite. Uncommon reactions include local bruising and blistering at the site of the insect bite.

These reactions can be managed with anti-itch medications and supportive measures to lessen discomfort. Fever or pus may mean the bite is infected and your healthcare provider should be notified.

Concerns for Sexual Abuse

While genital trauma can occur from falls and accidents, all children who experience genital trauma should be evaluated for the possibility of sexual and/or physical abuse. Your healthcare team will assess your child for potential abuse through careful questioning and physical examination. Evaluating for abuse when there has been genital trauma is important for the health and safety of children. If abuse is suspected, your healthcare provider is required by law to report the incident to the appropriate authorities for further evaluation.