



## Pre-pubertal Vulvovaginitis

### What is vulvovaginitis?

Vulvovaginitis refers to inflammation or irritation of the genital area. It is common prior to puberty because there is less estrogen and the vulvar anatomy is different than in adults (thinner skin, smaller labia minora, shorter distance between the vagina and anus).

Children with vulvovaginitis may experience:

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

### 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 viral infections.

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 objects that some young children put in their vagina (like small bits of toilet paper) can also cause this problem.

### How is vulvovaginitis diagnosed?

Your healthcare provider may ask questions to learn about how and when the symptoms started, how they have changed, what makes the symptoms better or worse, and what (if any) previous treatment has been used.

They may also do a physical examination of the genital region and check for infection. An internal exam is not typically needed.

In some cases, a genital culture is recommended. If there is vaginal bleeding, an ultrasound of the pelvis will be performed. Rarely a biopsy of the skin may be recommended to diagnose a skin 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 widely 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 your child has an infection or skin condition and follow up with your provider as needed
- Symptoms usually improve as puberty approaches