

## GENERAL VULVAR CARE

While you are seeking effective treatment for vulvar problems, here are some coping measures to relieve symptoms and prevent further irritation. Even when your symptoms are under control, these guidelines are recommended as a preventive strategy.

### CLOTHING AND LAUNDRY:

- Wear all white cotton underwear, not just cotton-crotch underwear.
- Wear loose fitting underwear, pants or skirts. Take your underwear off when at home and go without underpants.
- Use dermatological approved detergents such as Nellie powder detergent, Purex, or any detergents that state “free and clear” on label. This statement means that there are no fragrances or dyes in the product.
- Double-rinse underwear and any other clothing that comes into contact with the vulva.
- **Do not use:** bleach, fabric softener, fabric softener sheets on undergarments.
- **Do not** wear pantyhose (wear thigh-high or knee-high hose instead).
- **Avoid** exercise in tight synthetic clothes.
- **Avoid** thongs, body shaper or girdle completely.

### HYGIENE:

- Use soft, white, unscented toilet paper. Wipe front to back.
- Use lukewarm or cool sitz baths with nothing in the water to relieve burning or irritation.
- Avoiding soaps is best, but mild soaps that we recommend are Nature Pure Vegetal Base Bar Soap by Canus, Vanicream Cleansing Bar (**not liquid soap**: this can be purchased on Amazon.com), Neutrogena fragrance -free, Cetaphil Gentle skin cleanser (or CVS equivalent) or Pure Olive oil soap.
- Wash the vulva with cool to lukewarm water only.
- Rinse the vulva with water after urination. You can use spray bottle.
- Urinate before bladder is full.
- Prevent constipation by:
  - 1) adding fiber to your diet (if necessary, use a psyllium product such as Metamucil or Citrucel.)
  - 2) drinking at least 8 glasses of water daily.
- Use 100% cotton menstrual unscented pads and tampons such as “Natracare Products” (this is a full product line of menstrual products that are 100 % cotton, chemical and additive free. Products can be found at Whole Foods Market or online at [www.natracare.com](http://www.natracare.com)).
- **Avoid** close or dry shaving. If you need to shave, please use Vanicream shaving gel (this can be purchased on Amazon.com) or Aveeno Therapeutic Shave Gel (unscented).
- **Avoid** close waxing.
- **Avoid** daily use of panty liners. Change underwear as often as necessary to control wetness.
- **Avoid** getting shampoo in the vulvar area.
- **Avoid** using soap in vulvar area more than once daily.
- **Do not use:** bubble baths, bath salts, scented oils, feminine products (such as douche, feminine wash, powder), washcloth, baby wipe, loofah, puffs, latex condom, any perfumed creams, soaps, or shaving cream.
- **Avoid** hot bath, hot shower, or hot tub.

- **Avoid** wiping back to front after urinating.
- **Avoid** scratching or rubbing because it will make your symptoms worse.
- **Avoid** Aquaphore, Eucerin, A&D Ointment, Balmex, Boudreaux's Butt Paste, Desitin, Triple Paste, and Gold Bond.
- **Avoid** Summer's Eve, Vagisil, Baby Powder

### **OVER-THE COUNTER VULVAR AND VAGINAL PRODUCTS AND MEDICINES:**

- **Avoid** any over-the counter products for vulvar or vaginal itching.
- **Avoid** all products that contain benzocaine (for example: Vagisil, Lanacane, Vagicaïne).
- **Avoid** over-the-counter medications, such as Monistat 1 or Monistat 3, for treating yeast infections which can cause pain, burning or itching.

### **SEXUAL INTERCOURSE:**

- Use a lubricant that is water soluble, e.g., Good Glide can be found at Whole Foods. Astroglide, but be aware that it contains a preservative known as Propylene Glycol (P.G.) which some woman finds irritating.
- A dab of olive oil or unscented petroleum jelly is fine **if latex condoms are not used (they will break down the effectiveness of the condom.)**
- Ask your clinician for a prescription for a topical anesthetic, e.g., Lidocaine ointment (note that this medication may sting for the first 3- 5 minutes after application).
- Apply a cool pack or cool gel pack wrapped in one layer of a hand towel to the vulvar to relieve burning after intercourse. Frozen corn or peas in a small sealed plastic bag mold comfortably the vulvar anatomy, but be sure to have a barrier between the vulvar and the cold product.
- Urinate (to prevent infection) and rinse the vulva with cool water after sexual intercourse.
- **Avoid** lubricants that will cause heat on contact. For example, K-Y Personal Lubricant Warming Liquid.
- **Avoid** latex condoms. Some people might be sensitive to latex.

### **PHYSICAL EXERCISE:**

- Use cool packs wrapped in a towel to relieve symptoms after exercises.
- **Avoid** sitting in a wet bathing suit and or prolonged exposure to sweaty exercise clothes.
- **Avoid** exercises that put direct pressure on the vulva such as bicycle riding and horseback riding.
- **Limit** intense exercises that create a lot of friction in the vulvar area (try lower intensity exercises such as walking).
- **Avoid** swimming in highly chlorinated pools.
- **Avoid** the use of hot tubs.

### **EVERYDAY LIVING:**

- Use a foam rubber donut for long periods of sitting.
- If you must sit at work, try to intersperse periods of standing (e.g., rearrange your office so that you can stand while you speak on the phone).
- Try: yoga, acupuncture, and massage.

### **SOAK AND SEAL TREATMENT:**

If you are asked to do "Soak and Seal" as part of your **daily** vulvar care, we recommend you purchase sitz bath basin at local pharmacy. Fill with hot water (*careful not too hot*) and slide under toilet seat. Soak vulvar in water until water becomes cool. Immediately, you must apply skin emollient such as petroleum jelly (**unscented Vaseline**), **Vaniplly Ointment** (this can be purchased on Amazon.com) or **olive oil** to seal the moisture in vulvar area. Alternatively, apply topical medication as directed by your clinician.