



830 Oak Street, Suite 201W
Brockton, MA 02301
(508) 583-4961
Fax (508) 583-4732
Soheil.Hanjani@Steward.org
www.HanjaniMD.com

CARE OF THE VULVA

The skin of the vulva can be quite sensitive. Because it is moist and frequently subjected to friction while sitting and moving, it is an area that can be easily injured. There are various strategies that can be used to prevent irritation and allow the vulva to heal. Skin that is moist becomes soft and easily injured, therefore, keeping the vulva area dry can accelerate healing. Many vulva skin conditions can get much better if irritating chemicals are not used on the vulva area and care is taken to keep the vulva dry. Some specific measures that can help are:

Wear white 100% cotton underwear, and do not wear pantyhose, tights or other close-fitting clothes. Enclosing the vulva with synthetic fibers holds both heat and moisture in the skin, which can cause development of infections and irritation. Tight fitting clothes can also increase symptoms of discomfort. Even pantyhose worn over cotton underwear can increase vulva irritation; thigh high or knee high stockings can be used instead. Avoid wearing spandex, close fitting exercise short, leotards or tights.

After washing underwear, put them through at least one whole cycle with water only so that all the detergent is rinsed out. Rinsing clothes thoroughly is more important than which detergent is used. However, to be on the safe side the milder soap the better. You can use baking soda or Arm & Hammer detergent. Do not add bleach to your wash. Fabric softeners and drying sheets should not be used. Also, wash new underwear before wearing.

Rinse vulvar skin off with plain water frequently. Use tap water, distilled water, spring water, sitz baths, squirt bottles or bidets. Pat the skin dry gently, or dry with a cool hair dryer.

Use very mild soap for bathing Neutrogena, Basis, Castile Soap with Olive Oil (Conti)- are good soaps. Remember that frequent baths with soaps may increase irritation. You cannot wash away vulvar symptoms.

Toilet paper should be white and unscented.

Relief of symptoms - A compress of Oiled Aveeno (a powdered Oatmeal bath treatment) has been recommended by some (it is placed over the vulva three to four times a day). Put two tablespoons of Aveeno in one quart of water, mix and refrigerate. Use when symptoms are flaring, such as after intercourse. Some women have found warmed soaked tea bags to be soothing to the vulva (they can be placed on menstrual pads to be held in place).

Lubrication - Use lubrication to make intercourse more comfortable. Astroglide is a very good product with a natural lubricating action. Other lubricants include Lubrin, Replens and K-Y jelly.

Periods - If possible use 100% washable and reusable pads or disposable cotton pads (www.gladrags.com). Pure cotton tampons are also available.

Contraception - Some ingredients in contraceptive foams and sponges can cause irritation. The same can occasionally happen with diaphragm use.

Recreation and Sports - Do not sit or remain in a wet bathing suit. Also be aware that many swimming pools and hot tubs have chemicals such as chlorine and bromine added. These can be especially irritating to the vulvar skin. Some sports, such as bicycling and horseback riding can also worsen vulva conditions because of the constant rubbing and irritation. It might be worthwhile to discontinue such activities for a short while to see if the condition improves.

Sleep - If possible, it is recommended that the vulva be left uncovered at night (i.e. no underwear) to allow adequate exposure to the air.

Biopsy - If a biopsy is required, care of the biopsy site is very important. Keep the area clean and dry and avoid application of cream or ointment unless instructed to. Sitz baths twice a day for three to four days following the biopsy will aid healing. If there is any increase in redness or pain, heavy discharge of bleeding, call for further instructions. Avoid intercourse until the biopsy is fully healed, usually two weeks.

Harmful Products - If you are not sure whether a product you are using is irritating, avoid use. Avoid the following: Benzalkonium chloride, Benzyl Alcohol, Cetyl Alcohol, Diethylsulfoxide, Ethylenediamine, Formaldehyde, Hexachlorophine, Iodine, Parabens, Propylene Glycol, Sodium Lauryl Sulfate.

If there are any questions, please do not hesitate to call or come in.