



Female Genital Skin Care

Some women may experience redness, swelling, itching or burning of the external genitalia or vulva. It may be caused by an infection or chronic condition but is frequently related to irritation of the delicate tissue in this area. An examination and/or testing may need to be done to evaluate for more serious causes of these symptoms. Here are some hygiene practices to help treat these symptoms and avoid irritation in the vulvar region.

Wear cotton and loose-fitting garments instead of synthetic underwear, swimsuits, leotards, thongs, lycra garments or dance shorts.

Wear skirts or dresses and ensure that pants fit properly. Avoid jeans and tight pants.

Use thigh-high or knee-high stockings instead of wearing occlusive pantyhose.

Use fragrance-free and pH neutral soaps (eg, Neutrogena, Cetaphil). Scented soaps, shampoos and bubble baths may increase symptoms and irritation. Avoid scented laundry detergents.

Use tampons or cotton pads instead of panty liners.

Gently use fingertips for washing the vulva instead of a washcloth. Pat the skin dry and avoid rubbing or drying with a hair dryer.

Rinse the genital area (after urination or having a bowel movement) with water using a sports water bottle or perineal irrigation bottle instead of using baby wipes or flushable wipes.

Avoid using dyed toilet articles or toilet paper.

Feminine sprays, douches and powders **are not needed and not beneficial** to use in the genital area.

When the skin is particularly irritated, gentle care at home will significantly reduce symptoms. Sitz baths done two to four times a day will help to keep the area clean and allow the body to start to heal itself. This means soaking a bathtub filled with 8 to 10 inches of plain water (no additives) and at a comfortable temperature for five to 10 minutes. If a cream is recommended (either over-the-counter or prescription strength), it will work more effectively if it is applied after the cells are well hydrated from soaking in the warm water. The cream should only be used as directed in order to avoid potential side effects of skin thinning or damage.

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