

# Vulvar Skin Care Tips

- **Do not** use baby wipes.
- **Pads:** Only use Kotex<sup>®</sup>, Poise<sup>®</sup>, or Tena<sup>®</sup>. **Avoid Always<sup>®</sup>.**
- **Laundry:** **Do not** use Purex<sup>®</sup> or Gain<sup>®</sup>. Use Tide Free and Gentle™. **Do not** use fabric softener or dryer sheets.
- **Do not** use feminine hygiene products (such as Vagisil<sup>®</sup>).
- Keep the vulvar area open to the air as much as possible.
- **Do not** use toilet paper made from recycled paper.
- Wear all cotton white underwear as dyes can irritate the area.
- **Use unscented bar soap only** (such as Olay Sensitive, goat's milk unscented, Aveeno<sup>®</sup> fragrance free, or Dove<sup>®</sup> fragrance free). Avoid plant-based soaps.

# Vulvar Skin Care Tips

The vulva (area around the vagina) can be very sensitive. If you have itching or irritation in this area, using certain soaps and creams can make it worse. Here are some ideas to help with symptoms and prevent further discomfort.

## What can I do to feel better?

### Hygiene

- Wash the vulva no more than once a day.
  - › Use water only.
  - › **Do not** use a washcloth — use only your fingertips.
  - › Pat to dry with a soft towel. **Do not rub.**
  - › Put on clean underwear when dry.
- Use a fan or a hair dryer on the cool setting to help dry the vulva.
- **Do not** use baby wipes.
- Avoid soap, douches, powders, products with alcohol, and over-the-counter medications. **Do not** use Vagisil® (or other products which have benzocaine) on this area.
- If you feel you must use soap, **use unscented bar soap only** (such as Olay Sensitive, goat's milk unscented, Aveeno® fragrance free, or Dove® fragrance free). Avoid plant-based soaps.

- For vulvar or perianal (area directly between vulva and anus) dryness, use Vaseline® petroleum jelly or coconut oil.
- For vaginal dryness, use Replens® 2 nights each week.
- Do not shave your pubic hair. This can cause skin irritation.
- Use unscented tampons during your periods rather than pads, if possible. If you use pads, only use Kotex®. Avoid Always®.
- **Do not** use panty liners. If you have a lot of discharge or tend to pee when laughing, sneezing, or running, use incontinence pads (such as Poise® or Tena®).
- Use white, unscented toilet paper only. **Do not** use toilet paper made from recycled paper. Pat the area dry.
- Keep your fingernails cut short. Consider wearing cotton gloves at night to help avoid scratching.

## Nutrition

- Drink plenty of fluids every day to keep your urine (pee) and vaginal discharge diluted (thinner).

- Constipation (not being able to poop) can cause tissues in the area to tear. Prevent constipation by eating more fibre. Eat 1 to 2 large servings of a high fibre cereal with 8 to 14 grams of fibre per serving, as well as whole grains, beans, lentils, or leafy vegetables. If this does not help, talk with your primary health care provider or pharmacist about over-the-counter products that can help.

## Clothing

- **Do not** wear tight pants or leggings made of synthetic fabrics, such as polyester or nylon.
- Consider not wearing underwear when at home. Keep the vulvar area open to the air as much as possible.
- Wear all cotton white underwear as dyes can irritate the area.
- **Do not** wear pantyhose, leggings, tights, or yoga pants.
  - › If you wear them, cut out the crotch area to allow better air circulation.
- Take off wet bathing suits and exercise clothing as soon as possible to prevent irritation.

## Laundry

- Wash clothes in detergent that is “unscented”, “clear”, or “free” (such as Tide Free and Gentle™). Do not use Purex® or Gain®.
- **Do not** use fabric softener or dryer sheets (such as Bounce®).
- If using a stain removal product, soak the clothes, then rinse in cold water before washing them in the regular wash cycle.

## Controlling discomfort

- If prescribed cream or ointment causes a burning feeling, stop using it and call your primary health care provider.
- Putting something cold near the area can help burning and itching. Try ice, frozen peas, cool packs, or a frozen gel pack wrapped in a soft towel.
- **Be careful not to overdo this, since frostbite is a real possibility.**

## Sex

- Use a lubricant (lube). Astroglide®, Slippery Stuff® ([www.slipperystufflubes.com](http://www.slipperystufflubes.com)), or vegetable oil (**not K-Y Jelly®**) are good choices.

- If sex is painful, try applying a topical anesthetic (such as Xylocaine® or lidocaine — **not** Vagisil®) 30 minutes before.
- Contraceptive creams, spermicides, and latex condoms can be irritating and cause burning. Avoid them and use another form of contraceptive, if possible.
- Using moisturizers with condoms can cause the condom to break. Do not use these together.

## **Appointments and questions**

To confirm or reschedule a Clinic appointment, please call 902-473-6112. If you have any questions or concerns, call the Clinic.

### **Clinic Nurse**

Phone: 902-473-4181

Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

**In an EMERGENCY, call 911 or go to the nearest Emergency Department.**

**What are your questions?**

**Please ask. We are here to help you.**

**Colposcopy Clinic**  
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[www.nshealth.ca](http://www.nshealth.ca)

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The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.