

Vulvovaginitis in Children

Parent Information



Department of Dermatology
Royal Hospital for Children
Glasgow

What is it?

Inflammation or irritation of the vagina and vulva (the opening of the vagina).

Presentation

Your child may have redness, irritation, itching and sometimes there may be a discharge. The colour of the discharge may range from clear to yellow or green or even faintly brown. There may be discomfort when passing urine.

Usual causes

- Lack of the female hormone (oestrogen) in young girls. This will correct itself when your child starts producing oestrogen at the onset of puberty.
- Threadworms can often cause severe itching or irritation, especially at night. Your doctor may prescribe treatment for all the family.
- In some cases the symptoms may be caused by an infection. Your child may need swab tests to rule out this possibility. They are usually carried out at the time of the examination. The swabs we use are very fine and cause little discomfort.
- Eczema may cause the skin to be more sensitive than normal. This can lead to irritation by common things like bubble baths, soaps and washing powders.



Management

- Avoid using any soap, bubble baths, shower gels or antiseptics like Dettol or Savlon. Wash hair separately (not in the same water your daughter sits in) with non-perfumed shampoo. Avoid hot tubs/hot baths.
- Avoid over-washing of vulva. Use lots of moisturiser such as soft white paraffin (Vaseline) to affected area. Add non-perfumed bath oil to bath water. Your doctor may prescribe a barrier cream.
- Avoid tight fitting clothes e.g. jeans and tights. Cotton underwear is best. If your child is overweight, losing weight may help in reducing friction in the area.
- Wipe (front to back) after passing urine. Use non-coloured, unscented toilet paper.
- Use non-biological, non-fragranced washing powder and fabric softener.
- Avoid swimming in highly chlorinated pools. When swimming, use barrier cream beforehand to reduce irritation.
- Keep finger nails short. Your child may be scratching the skin during the night when she is unaware of doing so.

The condition can be distressing at times, but is usually controlled by the above measures. In most cases girls grow out of it around puberty as they start to produce hormones.



