

Vulvitis

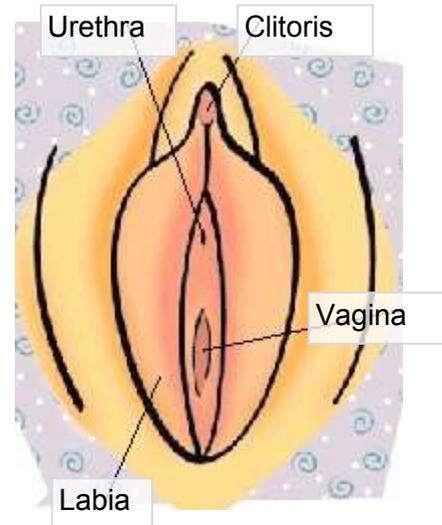
What is vulvitis?

The vulva is the whole female genital area. It includes the labia, clitoris, vagina, and the urethra. If the skin gets sore, red and swollen, it is called vulvitis. The main symptom is itching of the vulva. Passing urine may become uncomfortable. If the vagina gets infected, there will be a vaginal discharge. The pain goes away after 1 to 2 days of treatment.

This problem is most common in young girls before puberty.

What is the cause?

- Most vaginal itching or pain is caused by a soap irritation. The common irritants are bubble bath, shampoo, or soap that are left on the genital area. Before puberty, the lining of the vulva is very thin and sensitive to any soap.
- It can also be caused by not cleaning well after using the bathroom, such as wiping from back to front.



How is it treated?

Baking soda, warm water soaks.

- Put 4 tablespoons of baking soda in a bathtub of warm water. **Note:** Baking soda is better than vinegar soaks for younger girls.
- Have your daughter soak her bottom in the tub (basin or bathtub) for 10 minutes. Be sure she opens her legs and lets the water cleanse the genital area. **Do not use soap.**
- Do this two times a day for the next 2 days. This will remove any soap, concentrated urine, or other irritants from the genital area and promote healing.

After the symptoms go away, cleanse the genital area once a day with warm water.

Hydrocortisone ointment

Use 1% hydrocortisone ointment. You can buy this over-the-counter without a prescription. Put a tiny amount on the genital area after the soaks. **Do not** put the ointment in the vagina. Do this for 2 days, and then stop using it.

If needed for comfort, a barrier cream like diaper paste, can be put on over the ointment.

Wash your hands after putting on the ointment.

How can it be prevented?

- Teach your daughter to wipe herself from front to back. This is very important after a poop (bowel movement).
- Use only warm water to clean the genital area. Soap is not needed.
- Don't use bubble bath before puberty. It is very irritating to the skin. Don't put soap or shampoo in the bath water. Don't let a bar of soap float around in the bathtub. If you are going to wash your child's hair, do this at the end of the bath or in the shower.
- Keep bath time to less than 10 minutes. Have your daughter try to urinate as soon as she is done with the bath.
- Have her wear cotton underpants. Underpants made of polyester or nylon don't let the skin "breathe." Have your daughter go without underpants during the night so the genital area has a chance to "air out."
- Have her drink enough fluids each day to keep the urine light-colored. Darker urine is concentrated and can be an irritant.
- After swimming change out of the wet swimming suit.
- Very tight pants and leggings can make the problem worse.

ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any concerns or if your child:

- Is still itching after 48 hours of treatment.
- Has discharge or bleeding from the vagina.
- Has pain when urinating.
- Has special health care needs not covered by this information.

This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.

Information adapted from Barton D. Schmitt, MD, author of "My Child Is Sick", American Academy of Pediatrics Books.