

VULVOVAGINITIS

What is vulvovaginitis?

Vulvovaginitis is a common issue in young girls and results from inflammation of the vulva (the external genitalia) and sometimes the vagina (the internal genital space). Symptoms include itching, redness and tenderness in the genital area. They may sometimes also have discharge from the vagina. This can stain underwear and have a strong smell. Once puberty starts this issue becomes less common.

What causes it?

Vulvovaginitis is due to the genitalia getting irritated. Irritation can be from:

- Tight clothing that rubs
- Prolonged dampness
- Strong soap or detergent
- Bacteria from the anus
- Skin problems (eczema or psoriasis)
- Constipation
- Sexual abuse

Why do children get vulvovaginitis?

Young girls have a greater risk because:

- They have thin and delicate skin in the genital area, which is easily irritated (this is what gets better once puberty starts)
- They can spread germs from anus to the vulva and vagina by wiping back to front
- They do other things that can irritate the skin of their genitals (playing in sand, on slides, teeter-totters, wearing tight leotards or wet bathing suits)

How is it treated?

- Give your child Sitz baths twice a day in warm water to soothe the skin. She may find urinating into the bath soothing as well.
- After each poop wipe well and rinses with water. Remember to wipe from front to back.
- Apply a thin layer of diaper cream to the vulva
- Treat constipation (see “Abdominal Concerns” then “constipation” on our website)