



Saint Mary's Managed Clinical Service
Division of Gynaecology

Paediatrics and Adolescent Gynaecology

PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET

VULVOVAGINITIS

WHAT IS VULVOVAGINITIS?

Vulvovaginitis is a very common disorder affecting girls before puberty. It is inflammation of the vagina and vulva.

SYMPTOMS OF VULVOVAGINITIS

The main symptoms are vaginal discharge and soreness. The discharge can be white, yellow or green and can be smelly. Other symptoms may include redness of vulval area, itching and pain when passing urine.

Please note: if any blood is noticed in the discharge, then please inform your doctor as further investigations may be required.

WHAT CAUSES VULVOVAGINITIS?

Vulvovaginitis is usually caused by repeated infections with bugs that are a normal part of the body. They often live in the gut, bowel, nose or mouth. These bugs are easily transferred to the vulval area by young girls as they learn to be responsible with their own personal hygiene. Other factors that make girls who have not gone through puberty more prone to infection in this area are:

- A lack of female hormones which make the vaginal lining and vulva skin thin and less resistant to infection.
- Before puberty the vagina is not acidic (unlike after puberty) so bugs can easily grow and cause infection.
- The vulva is very close to the anus (bottom) making it easy to spread bugs from the gut to the vulva.
- The labia (lips) are flat and underdeveloped and do not offer a barrier to infection
- It is unlikely that the symptoms are caused by thrush in girls prior to puberty

ANY NECESSARY TESTS?

Sometimes your doctor may take a swab of the discharge from the outside of the vagina. This does not hurt. If there is pain on passing urine, a urine sample may be sent to look for infection. If any infection shows up on either of these tests, it may be treated with antibiotics.

IS THERE ANY TREATMENT?

There is no particular treatment, and the condition will disappear when your child goes through puberty. These are some helpful tips that may help to improve your child's symptoms:

- Teach your child to wipe front to back after using the toilet.

- Teach your child to pass urine with their knees wide apart to prevent urine from collecting on the skin around the vagina. If this is hard try using a footstool to help.
- Make sure their bottom is completely clean after opening their bowels.
- Avoid soaps, shower gels and bubble baths. Instead use a moisturiser as a soap substitute such as Dermal. This can be prescribed for you.
- Avoid wet wipes
- Avoid fabric conditioners and biological laundry detergent
- Avoid bubble bath or scented soaps. Showers are better than baths.
- Wear cotton knickers and avoid tightfitting clothing.
- Avoid wearing underwear at night.
- A barrier cream such as Sudocream™ can be used if the skin is sore, at least twice daily. Do not apply any other types of cream unless advised by your doctor. If your child has pain when passing urine, you can apply a barrier cream before going to the toilet.
- Constipation can make the problem worse. Try to avoid it with a healthy diet, or if it becomes a problem, you can get it treated by the GP

WILL IT CAUSE ANY LONG-TERM PROBLEMS?

Vulvovaginitis can come back but does improve as your child gets older.

The infections associated with vulvovaginitis are different from those that adult women get and do not cause any problems with menstruation (periods) or fertility. There is no association with pelvic inflammatory disease or tubal damage.

If you require any further information or clarification, including clarification of terminology, please do not hesitate to talk to one of the doctors or nurses, who will be happy to discuss your concerns with you.

CONTACT DETAILS

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