

Vulvo-vaginitis

Vulvo-vaginitis is inflammation or irritation of the vagina and vulva (the opening of the vagina). Mild - is a very common problem in young girls. It will affect most girls at some stage. Some girls will have Vulvo-vaginitis many times. As girls begin to develop breasts, their Vulvo-vaginitis usually gets better. In most girls Vulvo-vaginitis is not a serious problem and it will usually improve with simple steps. In most cases no treatment or tests are needed.

Signs and symptoms

Girls with Vulvo-vaginitis often have:

- Itching in the vaginal area
- Some discharge from the vagina
- Redness of the skin between the labia majora (outside lips of the vagina)
- Burning or stinging when they pass urine
- In most mild cases, no treatment or tests are needed.
- In cases where it is troublesome, the doctor may advise a swab of the area be taken for testing, but the results are not always helpful.
- If you child has a more severe cases of Vulvo-vaginitis, blood stained discharge, or other skin problems she may be referred to a paediatrician or other specialist for further management.

Causes

The things that may cause Vulvo-vaginitis are:

1. The lining of the vagina and vulva can be quite thin in young girls and this can lead to it being easily irritated.
2. Moisture / dampness around the vulva. This is made worse by tight clothing and obesity.
3. Irritants (soap residue, bubble baths, antiseptics etc).
4. Threadworms sometimes cause or worsen Vulvo-vaginitis. Children with threadworms often scratch a lot at night. If itching is a major symptom then your daughter's doctor may suggest you look for threadworms.

Care at home

Firstly try not to worry, this is a common problem and a normal part of growing up for many girls. Try avoiding the things that make Vulvo-vaginitis worse:

- Wear loose cotton underwear and avoid tight trousers/jeans etc.
- Look at your child's weight and get some advice if she is overweight for her age and height.
- Don't use a lot of soap in the bath/shower and make sure it is well rinsed from the vulva. Avoid bubble baths and antiseptics in the bath.
- Some people find vinegar baths helpful (add 1/2 cup white vinegar to a shallow bath and soak for 10 to 15 minutes). Do this daily for a few days and see if it helps your daughter.
- Soothing creams (e.g. soft paraffin, nappy rash creams) may help settle the soreness, waterproof and protect

Treatment

the skin from the discharge which can be irritating.

- You may have to repeat these simple measures if the problem comes back.

Key points to remember

- Mild Vulvo-vaginitis is a very common problem in young girls.
- It may recur now and then but will improve as your child gets older.
- In most mild cases, no treatment or tests are necessary.