

Treating vulval inflammation and vaginal discharge (vulvovaginitis) in young girls

Children's Hospital

Information for Patients and Parents

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Introduction

Vulvovaginitis is very commonly seen in young girls. We hope this leaflet will give you a better understanding of this condition.

What is vulvovaginitis?

Vulvovaginitis means infection or inflammation in a girl's genital area (vagina and vulva).

What are the symptoms of vulvovaginitis?

Young girls can have colourless, green or yellow coloured liquid (discharge) from the genital area. Sometimes there is a lot of discharge and it may stain underwear.

The discharge can have a strong smell. Girls may also have itching, redness, pain and soreness when they pee.

Sometimes the discharge can be blood stained.

Is this a common problem in young girls?

This is a very common problem in young girls. They do not have the female hormone oestrogen until puberty, when they start their periods. This makes them more likely to have redness, swelling and infection of their vagina and vulva.

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How is this condition treated?

There is no standard treatment. This is a condition which will improve as your child starts puberty. However, if the soreness and discharge is very bad, the following may help:

- **Salt bath.** Add 2 large tablespoons of salt in about 16 pints of warm water in the bath. Get your child to sit in it for about 10 to 15 minutes. Do not add anything else to the bath water.
- **Vinegar bath.** This is an another option to a salt bath. Add ½ cup of white vinegar to a warm shallow bath. Gget your child to sit in it for 10 to 15 minutes. Do not add anything else to the bath water.
- After a bath, dry the genital area thoroughly. Apply soothing and protecting cream such as Vaseline, E45 or Diprobase.
- Your doctor may prescribe 1 course of antibiotics if there is a lot of discharge with a strong smell. Repeated courses of antibiotics, local steroid cream and antifungal creams like Canesten are not helpful.

Can this condition be prevented?

The most important thing is to keep the area around the vulva and vagina very clean.

Here are some do's and don'ts:

Do:

- Always wear cotton knickers/ pants.
- Change knickers/ pants at least once a day.
- Wash the vulva and vagina with a mild non-scented soap and rinse thoroughly with water. Dry after washing.
- Teach your child to wipe her vulva and vagina from front to back, every time she goes to the toilet, particularly after having a poo.
- Give your child plenty of fruit and vegetables to eat in their diet. Being overweight and constipated puts your child at risk of infection.

Do not:

- Do not use scented soaps, bubble bath and hard soaps.
- Do not wear knickers/ pants made out of synthetic material (avoid material like nylon).
- Do not wear leggings, tights or trousers, especially when made from synthetic material like nylon, particularly when genital soreness is bad.



Will this condition be cured?

The advice given in this leaflet will help to control the problem, but may not cure it in all cases.

As the problem is caused by a lack of the female hormone oestrogen, the condition will get better when your child starts puberty. The hormones produced will then protect the vulva and vagina from this condition.

There are no long-term risks from this condition.

When should I take my child to the doctor?

If the discharge is coloured, very smelly, or if there is any blood in the discharge, you should let your doctor know.

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