

vulvar hygiene

General rules for vulvar care

- Do as little to your vulva as possible
- Wash ONCE per day with warm water (*i.e. no soap!*) and fingers
- Handheld shower heads are gentle and effective
- Don't douche
- Avoid panty liners

If you have chronic vulvovaginal pain/irritation or recurrent vaginal infections

The most common irritants and allergens are OVER-washing & OVER-medicating!

During treatment the ONLY things that should contact your vulvar/vagina are water, the medications we prescribe and your partner.

Bathing

- Wash vulva once daily with lukewarm water and your finger tips
- Consider a handheld shower head
- Pat your vulva dry with a clean towel
- Use unscented, dye free bar soap for your body (*Dove and Cetaphil are good options*)
- Avoid fragrance (*including body wash and bath gels*)
- Avoid bubble baths, bath salts & scented oils (*your partner should also avoid these products*)
- Avoid very hot water (can be drying)
- Avoid washcloths, loofahs, scrubbing pads
- Avoid hair dryers

Toileting/Hygiene

- Use white, unscented toilet paper
- Tampons are preferable to pads (*unscented, preferably all-cotton*)
- Hair removal: trimming with scissors and/or laser are the least irritating
- AVOID baby wipes or adult wipes
- Don't douche
- Avoid "dry weave" (*the cyanoacrylate glue in them is vulvar irritant*)
- Avoid deodorized or scented pads
- Avoid use of panty liners or pads whenever possible
- Avoid shaving, waxing and depilatories

- If you must, you can rinse your vulva with a peri bottle after urination
- If you must, you can use a few drops of mineral oil on toilet paper for gentle anal cleansing, as needed

Laundry

- Choose a fragrance and dye free detergent; often labeled "Free & Clear" (*preferred brands: 7th Generation and ALL*)
- Use half the suggested amount per load
- Avoid bleach, fabric softeners and dryer sheets (*If needed, use dryer balls to soften cloths*)

Clothing

- Wear cotton underwear
- Change out of wet or sweaty clothing ASAP
- Avoid thongs
- Don't wear underwear when sleeping at night
- Avoid tight clothing (*i.e. yoga pants, skinny jeans, spanx, panty hose, girdles*)

Comfort Measures

- For itching and burning - sitz bath* with lukewarm water plus/minus 1 tsp of baking soda 1-3x per day
- Cool gel packs or make a "Mr. Frosty" - crushed ice in a condom wrapped in towel
- Avoid applying ice directly to skin (*frostbite will not make things better*), can place a clean, thin towel such as a flour sack towel around whatever cool pack you are using to achieve this protective barrier
- For dampness - change underwear frequently (*i.e. bring extra underwear to work and change mid-day*)
- Avoid Over The Counter products containing benzocaine (*i.e. Vagasil*)

* Sitz baths are shallow baths for your vulva and bottom. They are plastic basins designed to rest on the top of the toilet seat enabling you to bathe this part of your body without removing your clothing all they way. They can be purchased at many drug stores or medical supply stores. There are costlier versions that provide the option to be hooked up to the faucet or a solution bag (this is not necessary). We recommend the simple basin. Not only do sitz baths provide comfort, but they are a huge time saver - far easier than getting all the way in the tub. Typically we recommend plain tap water sitz baths over those with the tsp of baking soda, but both are options. Some patients get relief from even a short time in the sitz bath (a few minutes). Others find a longer soak, 10-15 minutes is more beneficial. ■