

## Self-Tips for Vulvar Skin Care and Vaginitis

Helpful over-the-counter products include AVEENO (soap, creams, and bath salts), hypo-allergenic baby wipes, zinc oxide (Desitin).

### Clothing and Laundry

- Wear all-white cotton underwear.
- Do not wear pantyhose (wear thigh high or knee high hose instead).
- Wear loose-fitting pants or skirts. Do not wear thong underwear.
- Remove wet bathing suits and exercise clothing promptly.
- Use dermatologically approved detergent such as Purex, Clear, or Dreft.
- Double-rinse underwear and any other clothing that comes into contact with the vulva.
- Do not use fabric softener on undergarments.

### Hygiene

- Use soft, white, unscented toilet paper or hypo-allergenic Baby Wipes.
- Use lukewarm or cool sitz baths to relieve burning and irritation.
- Avoid getting shampoo on the vulvar area.
- Do not use bubble bath, feminine hygiene products, or any perfumed creams or anti-bacterial soaps (Zest, Dial, Safeguard, Irish Spring, etc.).
- Wash the vulva with cool to lukewarm water only.
- Rinse the vulva with water after urination (using a peri-bottle and patting dry).
- Urinate before the bladder is full.
- Prevent constipation by adding fiber to your diet (if necessary, use a psyllium product such as Metamucil) and drinking at least 8 glasses of water daily.
- Use 100% cotton menstrual pads and tampons.
- No douching unless instructed. If you must douche use only vinegar and water mixes.
- Showers are better than tub baths.

### Sexual intercourse

- Use a long-acting lubricant that is water soluble, e.g., Astroglide.
- Ask your physician for a prescription for a topical anesthetic, e.g., Lidocaine gel 5%. (This may sting for the first 3-5 minutes after application.)
- Apply ice or a frozen blue gel pack (lunch box size) wrapped in one layer of a hand towel to relieve burning after intercourse.
- Urinate (to prevent infection) and rinse vulva with cool water after sexual intercourse.
- Do not use contraceptive creams or spermicides (condoms may worsen the symptoms).

### Physical Activities

- Avoid exercises that put direct pressure on the vulva such as bicycle riding and horseback riding.
- Limit intense exercises that create a lot of friction in the vulvar area (try lower intensity exercises such as walking).
- Use a frozen gel pack wrapped in a towel to relieve symptoms after exercise.
- Enroll in an exercise class such as yoga to learn stretching and relaxation exercise.
- Don't swim in highly chlorinated pools.
- Avoid the use of hot tubs.

### Everyday Living

- Use a foam rubber donut for long periods of sitting.
- If you must sit all day at work, try to intersperse periods of standing (e.g. rearrange your office so that you can stand while you speak on the phone).
- Learn some relaxation techniques to do during the day (The Relaxation and Stress Reduction Workbook by Davis, Eshelman and McKay or The Chronic Pain Control Workbook by Catalano and Hardin are recommended).