



Community Children's  
Health Partnership



# Vulvovaginitis in children

## Information for parents and carers

### STAR clinic

Working together, working with you

## What is vulvovaginitis?

Vulvovaginitis is a very common problem typically affecting young girls before puberty. It is characterised by redness and inflammation of the genital area specifically the vagina and vulva.

Symptoms are itchiness, soreness, pain when passing urine and sometimes a yellow/green discharge which stains the underwear.

## What causes it?

Vulvovaginitis is usually caused by infection of bacteria which normally colonise the body for example in the bowel. These bacteria can be easily transferred to the vulval area as girls become independent with wiping their bottoms after going to the toilet. It affects girls usually before they start puberty because the lack of hormone makes the skin thin and susceptible to infection. The vagina at this age is not acidic and the labia (lips) aren't as developed to act as a physical barrier.

## Is there a treatment?

Sometimes in the clinic we take a swab from the entrance of the vagina and send it to the laboratory for culture. We generally don't treat the condition with antibiotics or steroid creams as it will get better by itself.

## Ways to relieve symptoms

- Apply a barrier cream E.g Sudocrem which will help with soreness.
- Warm baths may help itching
- Avoid using any soap or bubble baths.
- Avoid tight fitting clothing eg leggings
- Wear cotton underwear and don't wear underwear at night

## Tips to prevent vulvovaginitis

- Good toilet hygiene - teaching girls to wipe front to back, make sure the area is clean after they have done a poo.
- Encourage a child to pass urine with legs spread apart
- Healthy diet and good fluid intake to avoid getting constipated as this makes it worse
- Applying lubricant eg Vaseline may be helpful before going swimming.

## What is the long term outlook?

Vulvovaginitis whilst being unpleasant for the child, it is not associated with any known long term problems and resolves during puberty. If any bleeding is seen or symptoms do not improve using above measures it is important to seek medical advice.

## How to contact us:

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If you or the individual you are caring for need support reading this leaflet please ask a member of staff for advice.

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