



Central and  
North West London  
NHS Foundation Trust

CNWL Sexual Health Service

# Vulval skin care

Information for patients

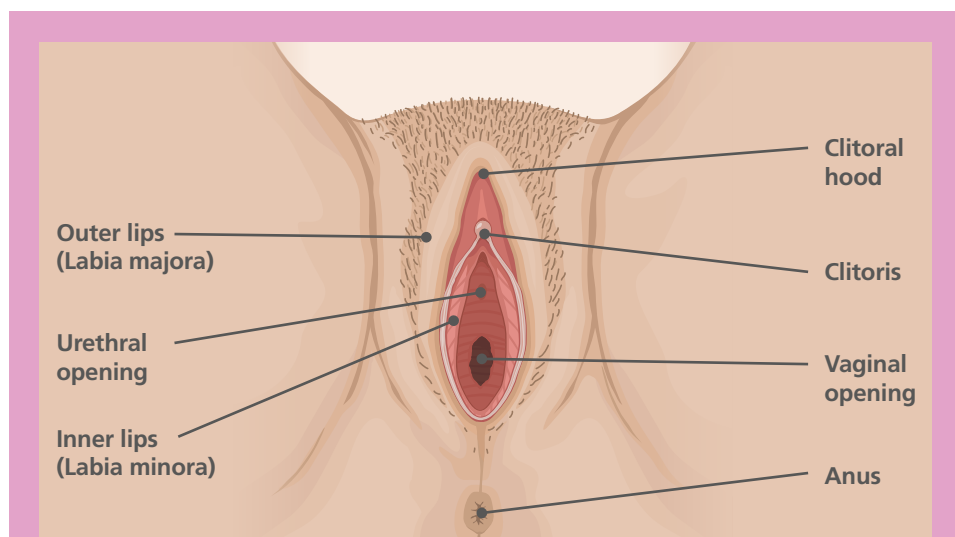


*Wellbeing for life*

## **This leaflet provides information and general advice on how to care for your vulval skin.**

You may have been diagnosed with a skin condition or infection affecting the vulva, in which case you should receive specific information about this condition and its treatments. You may be experiencing dryness, itching, discomfort and/or soreness without any specific diagnosis.

Medications should only be used as instructed but using emollients to protect your skin and soap substitutes should continue long-term.



### **The vulva**

The vulva is the name given to describe the parts of the female genitalia that can be seen and includes the inner and outer labia (lips) and clitoris. It is covered in skin like the rest of the body and means you can suffer a variety of skin conditions in this area.

Skin conditions affecting other parts of the body such as eczema or psoriasis can also affect the vulval skin.

For people going through menopause, changes in hormones and reducing levels of oestrogen may affect the vulval skin resulting in dryness, itching discomfort and soreness. Speak to your doctor if you are worried about genital symptoms not helped by using emollients that you think may be related to the menopause. Other symptoms associated with menopause will require discussion with a healthcare professional about possible hormone replacement therapy (HRT).

The skin of the vulva is sensitive and can be easily irritated by everyday products, as well as if a particular skin condition such as eczema or if an infection is present.

## Don't

- ✗ Wash with perfumed soaps or gels
- ✗ Perform vaginal douches or wash the vagina internally
- ✗ Use bubble baths, oils, shower gels, feminine hygiene wipes, cleansing wipes, antiseptics, talcum powder, fabric conditioners or fragranced washing powders. These can all irritate skin and may make itching worse
- ✗ Wash too many times as this disrupts the skins' natural bacteria and can add to any dryness and/or soreness
- ✗ Wear panty liners or sanitary towels, especially perfumed ones, on a regular basis
- ✗ Scratch – scratching leaves skin more damaged and sore. If itching at night is a problem or is severe, anti-histamines (anti-itching medication) can be bought in a pharmacy and may help. You can buy a non-drowsy one for use during the day or one which may cause drowsiness for use at night as this may help you to sleep
- ✗ Use scented toilet paper
- ✗ Wear tight clothing – tight jeans, leggings, cycling shorts and tights should be avoided where possible
- ✗ Shave, wax or use hair removal cream on the vulval area.

## Do

- ✓ Wash gently once a day with emollient. Avoid soap
- ✓ Use an unperfumed emollient (moisturiser) to protect the skin. This may be provided by the clinic or emollients are available to buy without prescription at most pharmacies. These can and should be applied several times per day directly to the vulval skin and rubbed in gently. Ensure your nails are kept short to avoid scratches and damage to the skin
- ✓ Make sure emollients are not used at the same time as any prescribed creams. Allow 15 to 30 minutes between moisturising and other topical creams. Use any prescribed creams as directed
- ✓ Make sure to take extra care around naked flames (including if smoking) when using emollients as they contain oils which are flammable – it can make bedding, clothing, hair or bed linen catch fire more easily
- ✓ Be aware that oil-based emollients can cause damage to latex condoms which may lead to splits and breaks
- ✓ Try an alternative emollient if a particular type irritates or stings. Stop altogether if any allergic reaction occurs, although this is rare
- ✓ Tell your healthcare provider if you experience any adverse side effects from any medication or creams you have been prescribed, or if your symptoms are persisting or worsening.



## Useful information

### **The British Society for the Study of Vulval Disease**

<https://bssvd.org/patient-information>

### **Skin conditions of the vulva patient information leaflet**

[www.rcog.org.uk/for-the-public/browse-all-patient-information-leaflets/skin-conditions-of-the-vulva-patient-information-leaflet](http://www.rcog.org.uk/for-the-public/browse-all-patient-information-leaflets/skin-conditions-of-the-vulva-patient-information-leaflet)

### **Genital Care for Women, The International Society for the Study of Vulvovaginal Disease**

[www.issvd.org/application/files/6116/3294/1889/02EN\\_-\\_GenitalCare\\_2021\\_V2.pdf](http://www.issvd.org/application/files/6116/3294/1889/02EN_-_GenitalCare_2021_V2.pdf)

### **Lichen simplex, British Association of Dermatologists**

[www.bad.org.uk/pils/lichen-simplex](http://www.bad.org.uk/pils/lichen-simplex)

### **Genital skin problems**

<https://dermnetz.org/topics/genital-skin-problems>



This document is also available in other languages, large print, Braille, and audio format upon request. Please email [communications.cnwl@nhs.net](mailto:communications.cnwl@nhs.net)

هذه الوثيقة متاحة أيضاً بلغات أخرى والأحرف الطباعية الكبيرة وبطريقة برايل للمكفوفين وبصيغة سمعية عند الطلب

## Arabic

این مدرک همچنین بنا به درخواست به زبانهای دیگر، در چاپ درشت و در فرمت صوتی موجود است.

## Farsi

এই ডকুমেন্ট অন্য ভাষায়, বড় প্রিন্ট আকারে, ব্রেল এবং অডিও টেপ আকারেও অনুরোধ পাওয়া যায়

## Bengali

Dokumentigaan waxaa xitaa lagu heli karaa luqado kale, daabacad far waa-wayn, farta indhoolaha (Braille) iyo hab dhegaysi ah markii la soo codsado.

## Somali

Mediante solicitação, este documento encontra-se também disponível noutras línguas, num formato de impressão maior, em Braille e em áudio.

## Portuguese

நீங்கள் கேட்டுக்கொண்டால், இந்த ஆவணம் வேறு மொழிகளிலும், பெரிய எழுத்து அச்சிலும் அல்லது ஒலிநாடா வடிவிலும் அளிக்கப்படும்.

## Tamil

Este documento también está disponible y puede solicitarse en otros idiomas, letra grande, braille y formato de audio.

## Spanish

Dokument ten jest na życzenie udostępniany także w innych wersjach językowych, w dużym druku, w alfabecie Braille'a lub w formie audio.

## Polish

આ દસ્તાવેજ વિનંતી કરવાથી બીજી ભાષાઓ, મોટા છાપેલા અક્ષરો અથવા ઓડિઓ રચનામાં પણ મળી રહેશે.

## Gujarati

Be belge istenirse, başka dillerde, iri harflerle, Braille ile (görme engelliler için) ve ses kasetinde de temin edilebilir.

## Turkish