

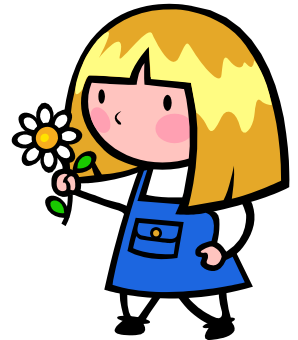
# Vulvovaginitis in Young Girls

## Child Health Information

Childhood vulvovaginitis is a fairly common condition in young girls where the vagina and the vulva ('private parts') become inflamed. It causes itching, redness and soreness between the legs. There is often a yellow or green vaginal discharge which may stain the pants.

The condition is commonest between the ages of 3 to 10 years.

It will often improve by itself and always improves at puberty but usually resolves quite quickly.



### What causes it?

Vulvovaginitis is usually caused by infections with germs (bacteria) that are a normal part of the body. They often live in the gut, bowel, nose or mouth. These germs are easily transferred to the vulval area by young girls as they learn to look after their own personal hygiene.

Although infection is part of the cause antibiotics are not usually helpful. In girls who have not reached puberty the symptoms are hardly ever caused by thrush (candida).

Young girls are more prone to vulvovaginitis because they have lower levels of female hormones so the vagina and vulva are thin and less resistant to infection. Before puberty the vagina is not acidic like after puberty so bacteria can easily grow and cause infection.

### Are any investigations needed?

Sometimes swabs from the entrance to the vagina and urine samples are sent to the lab. If the discharge contains blood then more investigations are usually needed.

### What can be done to help improve and prevent this condition?

To help improve the symptoms and prevent it coming back the following things are advised:

- Good toilet hygiene. Teach girls to always wipe from front to back after using the toilet.
- Make sure that the child is encouraged to pass urine with the legs spread apart.
- Rinsing after passing urine or having a poo may be helpful – do this by pouring warm water over the genitals into the toilet or using a shower attachment. Pat dry with a soft cloth.

- A warm bath may help with itching. Avoid perfumed bubble baths and soaps. The area should be dried carefully by patting with a soft towel.
- Soothing creams (eg, nappy rash creams such as Bepanthen<sup>®</sup>) may help settle the soreness and protect the skin.
- It is best to wear cotton pants and to avoid tight clothes such as leggings or jeans.
- Avoid wearing pants in bed.
- If there is any suggestion of threadworms then medicine to treat this will be suggested, this can be bought from a pharmacist.

### Will it cause any long-term harm?

---

Childhood vulvovaginitis will always improve at puberty if not before. It is a different condition from vaginitis in adult women and it does not cause any long term problems.

If you have further questions or worries contact your GP, paediatrician, health visitor or school nurse.