

# VULVAL ECZEMA

## What is vulval eczema?

The main features of eczema are dry, itching, red and inflamed skin. The words eczema and dermatitis mean the same thing. It can occur in any site and the vulva is commonly affected. Sometimes the skin becomes so itchy that it is impossible not to scratch the area. Repeated scratching causes the skin to become swollen and thickened, this is called lichenification.

## What causes vulval eczema?

There are many different causes; some people have an inherited tendency to develop eczema in this site. In others it is caused by repeated exposure to products which irritate the skin in this area e.g. soap, cleansers, antiseptics etc. Vulval eczema is not infectious; you cannot pass it on to your partner.

## How is vulval eczema treated?

General care of the vulva is very important

- Avoid all soap, bubble-baths, deodorants, wipes from coming into contact with the vulval area (avoid washing hair in the bath)
- Use a greasy moisturiser (eg Epaderm or Hydromol ointment) instead of soap and if it helps apply it regularly for pain, irritation or itching
- Clean the vulval area only once a day, excessive washing can cause further irritation.
- Wear loose fitting cotton underwear
- Add an extra rinse cycle when washing underwear, fabric conditioners and washing powders can irritate the vulval skin
- If passing water makes your symptoms worse, try washing the urine away from the vulval area using a jug of warm water whilst on the toilet
- Make sure you only use prescribed creams or ointments

Specific treatment for vulval eczema will usually take the form of a **topical steroid** cream or ointment to be applied once or twice daily. It is also very important to use a bland **regular moisturiser** such as Epaderm/Hydromol Ointment.

## Is it safe to use a steroid cream in this area?

Yes it is completely safe to use steroid creams and ointments in the genital area for this condition.

## For further information contact:

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