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Vulvitis

What Is Vulvitis And What Causes It?

Vulvitis is the inflammation of the external female genitalia, called the vulva. It can be caused by the vulva coming in contact with irritants that can cause dermatitis, eczema or allergic reactions. Known allergens are soaps, bath additives, and fragrances. A woman may also experience inflammation of the vulva due to an infection. It is more frequently seen in prepubescent and postmenopausal women because of the lower level of estrogen in their bodies compared to those women who menstruate.

What Are The Symptoms Of Vulvitis?

Inflammation of the vulva may cause one or more of the following:

- burning or itching in the area of the vulva
- redness of the vulva and surrounding tissue
- thickening of the skin around the vulva
- vaginal discharge
- small cracks in the skin around the vulva

How Is Vulvitis Diagnosed?

Your doctor will request a pelvic exam, which will reveal one or more of the symptoms listed above. Swabs of the vagina may be done in order to rule out infection.

How Is Vulvitis Treated?

If inflammation is caused by irritants or allergens, then the use of those items should be halted. Your doctor may suggest a topical cream that will alleviate the burning and itching. The creams can be applied several times a day to the affected area to reduce swelling and stop discomfort.

If the vulvitis is due to an infection, your doctor may prescribe an antibiotic or anti-fungal medication. You may also use a topical cream to alleviate the burning and itching until the medication takes effect.

How Can This Be Prevented?

Daily cleansing with soap and water followed by thorough drying is one of the best ways to avoid vulvitis. This will reduce the amount of time that vulva area is exposed to irritants such as detergents and perfumes. Avoid contact with any feminine hygiene products that contain fragrances and powders.

Dryness is very important. Avoid wearing tight fitting clothes that can rub the skin around the genital area and cut off good air circulation. Cotton underwear is better than silk or nylon for circulation. Remove any wet clothing as soon as possible. Dampness promotes irritation and the possibility of infection.