

CVH Vulvar Skin Care Recommendations

Healthy vulvar skin is important for day to day comfort. Take a moment to review your skin care routine.

Be gentle with the vulvar skin. Do not over wash. This can dry out the skin and make it more prone to irritation. Avoid prolonged exposure to hot water. Do not rub the skin excessively – do not use a face cloth to wash the skin. Do not use a hair dryer to dry the skin. It is best to rinse the skin with water and pat dry with a soft towel.

Do moisturize and protect the skin. For optimal skin care use a moisturizer on the vulvar skin on a daily basis. After a bath or shower use a moisturizer for sensitive skin on the outside lips, inside lips and perineum. It is common that women will involuntarily leak urine or stool as they get older. If this is the case, use a protective barrier such as Vaseline or a zinc based product. The barrier cream will sit on top of the skin, seal in the moisture and protect against contact with irritating substances.

Try to **avoid all contact with chemicals** that can irritate the vulvar skin.

Do not use bar soap, feminine “wipes”, douches, perfumes, or feminine hygiene spray.

Do not add fabric softener to clothes or towels.

Do not treat “suspected” infections. Many over the counter medications that treat yeast and or bacterial infections have ingredients in them that are irritating to the vulvar skin. Check with your doctor to see if you have an infection and then choose a medication that you can take by mouth.

If you must use soap, consider a soap substitute and or gentle skin cleansers. Look for products designed for sensitive skin and labelled hypoallergenic.

Avoid contact with synthetic materials that rub against the vulvar skin. Avoid underwear that is tight fitting or rubs the skin (eg. thong underwear). Instead of synthetic menstrual pads and or liners consider using: a menstrual cup (these are good for the environment and come in a range of sizes and materials) or a reusable menstrual cloth pad. While these pads may cost more initially they will last for years.

Wear loose clothing that encourages the air to circulate around the vulva. If you exercise on a regular basis try alternating exercise outfits from workout to workout so that you do not have the same area of the vulva being rubbed while exercising. Avoid wearing tight fitting synthetic stretch pants and underwear for every workout.

Do add lube. Don’t be embarrassed, most women will find a lubricant enhances sexual pleasure. Apply the lubricant to the outside skin of the vulva as well as the entrance to the vagina just before sex. There are different types of lubricants. Review the ingredients listed on the lubricant. Some lubricants are made only with botanical or all natural ingredients. Do not use lubricants with “cooling or warming” sensations. Lubricants and vaginal moisturizers can be bought discreetly online. What type to buy? There are different types – see our website for more details www.bcvulvarhealth.ca under Steps to Restoring Vulvar Health.