

NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde
Gynaecology Services

Looking after your Vulva

Patient Information



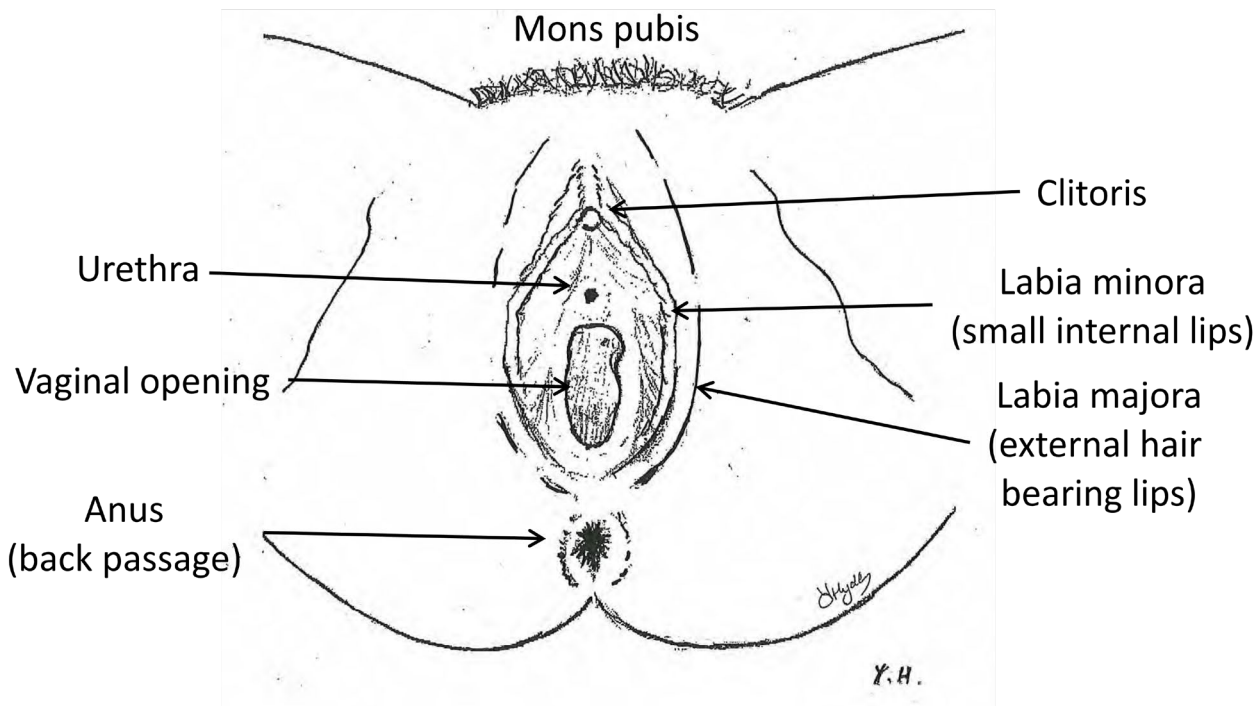
Your Vulva

Your vulva refers to the area surrounding the vaginal opening. It includes the labia (inner and outer lips) and the clitoris.

Your vulva will change throughout your life. Some women will experience symptoms of itch, discomfort, soreness or change in colour or texture. If you are concerned you should be checked by your doctor.

This leaflet will outline how to undertake self examination, and also some helpful measures to look after your vulval skin.

Self examination



If you are comfortable it is helpful to check the area yourself with a mirror. The self examination diagram above labels the areas which you can inspect during your examination.

For further support with self examination ask for help from your medical practitioner or consult the self-examination area at

<https://vulvalpainsociety.org.uk>

You should always let your doctor know if you have any ulcer, warty areas or bumps which are not healing with treatment or are growing bigger.

Helpful measures

Listed below are several things which you can do yourself to help calm down any irritation, itching or soreness of the vulval area.

Washing

- Wash the vulval area with emollients (e.g. Dermol 500, Aveeno®)
- Avoid over-washing or scrubbing with flannels or brushes
- Dry the skin area very gently (no rubbing) with a soft towel or use a hairdryer on a cool setting
- Do not use soaps, bubble-baths, deodorants, feminine washes or vaginal wipes in or around the vulval area
- Avoid using antiseptics in the bath
- Use a moisturiser such as Cetraben, Hydromol or Epaderm ointment after washing. Application should also be repeated during the day to moisturise and provide a protective barrier for the skin
- Take care when using moisturisers in the bath or shower as they can make surfaces slippery

Irritants

- When washing your hair, avoid allowing the shampoo from coming into contact with the vulval area.
- If passing urine makes your symptoms worse, wash the urine away from the vulval area using a jug of warm water while on the toilet
- If swimming or exercising, protect the vulval area with a barrier ointment such as Cetraben
- Use unscented unbleached tampons and sanitary pads and panty liners. Avoid plastic coated sanitary pads.
- Itching can sometimes be prevented or relieved by just holding the area tightly for several minutes
- Avoid coloured toilet paper

Clothing

- Wear loose fitting, non coloured cotton or silk underwear and change daily
- Wash underwear using non-biological washing detergent and avoid fabric conditioner

Sex

- If sex is uncomfortable lubricants such as Sylk[®], Pasante TLC[®] or Yes VM[®] may help. These lubricants can also be used as a vaginal moisturiser on a daily basis if this helps your symptoms.

Useful websites and further information

www.lichensclerosus.org

<https://vulvalpainsociety.org.uk>

www.bad.org.uk

www.bssvd.org.uk

www.rcog.org.uk

Useful Contacts

Your doctor in clinic today will have given you some suggestions regarding management of your vulval symptoms.

If you have any concerns or are uncertain, please contact your GP or practice nurse in the first instance.