Key points to remember

- Mild vulvovaginitis is a very common problem in young girls.
- It may recur now and then but will improve as your child gets older.

In most mild cases, no treatment or tests are necessary.

Additional information

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Vulvovaginitis

Vulvovaginitis is inflammation or irritation of the vagina and vulva (the opening of the vagina). Mild vulvovaginitis is a very common problem in young girls. It will affect most girls at some stage. As girls enter puberty, this usually improves.

In most girls vulvovaginitis is not a serious problem and it will usually improve with simple steps. In most cases no treatment or tests are needed.

Signs and symptoms

- Itching in the vaginal area
- Some discharge from the vagina
- Redness of the skin between the labia majora (outside lips of the vagina)
- Burning or stinging when they pass urine

Causes

Things that may trigger vulvovaginitis include:

- The lining of the vagina and vulva can be quite thin in young girls and this can lead to it being easily irritated.
- Moisture / dampness around the vulva. This is made worse by tight clothing and obesity.
- Irritants (soap residue, bubble baths, antiseptics etc).
- Infrequent bathing or poor toileting habits.
- Avoid wearing a wet bathing suit for a long period of time or heavily chlorinated swimming pool water.
- Look at your child's weight and ask for advice if she is overweight for her age and height.
- Avoid soap, antiseptics or anything that bubbles in the bath.
- Bathing for 5-7 minutes daily with a soap substitute such as oilatum may help symptoms.
- Soothing creams (e.g. soft paraffin) may help settle the soreness, waterproof and protect the skin from the discharge which can be irritating.

You may have to repeat these measures if the problem comes back.

Treatment

- In most mild cases, no treatment or tests are needed.
- In cases where it is troublesome, the doctor may advise a swab of the area be taken for testing, but the results are not always helpful.
- If you child has a more severe cases of vulvovaginitis, blood stained discharge, or other skin problems she may be referred to specialist for further management.

Care at home

- Wear loose cotton underwear and avoid tight jeans.
- Make sure that your daughter is wiping from front to back when toileting, particularly after opening bowels.
- Avoid irritants e.g. perfumes, dyes, some laundry detergents,