



Information for You from Your Health Care Team

Vulvodynia

What is it?

The word vulvodynia means painful vulva. This term is now being used to identify this disease which includes painful vulva with or without redness and swelling. This illness can be mild to severe. If it is mild, a burning or stinging feeling is noticed during sex or when tampons are inserted. When the pain is severe, even a cotton swab touching the outer vulva area causes pain. Pain in the vulvar area is one of the most common signs of the disease. Other things that may occur are itching, dryness, and swelling.

What causes it?

We do not know the exact cause at this time. It may be associated with HPV infection or candida infection. No one knows for sure.

How do I find out I have it?

There is no specific test for this disease. All vulvar infections have to be ruled out first.

Treatment:

There are no magic cures. Some treatments for infection work. Some estrogen creams work. Some treatments to decrease the pain work. A diet low in oxalates has been used with some relief of the symptoms. (see list below) Other things that have been tried are laser removal of affected area, biofeedback, and topical anesthetics.

How can you cope?

There are support groups for the express purpose of talking about what is happening and what things work for you. Talking over your concerns does not change the disease. It helps you understand it a little better. Some families may need sexual counseling.

Helpful habits:

During your period try cotton pads or tampons instead of synthetic. Cut off strings of tampon if they bother your skin. Rinse the vulva area several times a day with water. Wear cotton underwear, and pantyhose with crotch opened up. Avoid bath oils and perfumes, use non-scented soap on clothes and rinse twice. Keep area dry by using hair dryer on cool setting to dry the skin.

For a low oxalate diet, the following foods should be avoided:

Beer, berry juices especially raspberry, tea, cocoa, Ovaltine, beverage mixes, baked beans in tomato sauce, peanuts and peanut butter, pecans, soybean curd tofu, all berries, concord grapes, citrus peel, rhubarb, tangerines, chocolate, vegetable and tomato soups, fruit cake, grits, wheat germs, black pepper, beans of all kinds, beets, celery, chard, collards, dandelion, eggplant, escarole, kale, leeks, mustard greens, okra, parsley, green peppers, sweet potatoes, rutabagas, spinach, summer squash and watercress

Please call if you think you might have this condition, (315) 464-5210.