Vulvovaginitis

What is vulvovaginitis?
Vulvovaginitis is an inflammation of both the vulva and the vagina. The vulva is the female's external genitalia that includes the labia and the opening of the vagina and urethra. The vulva and vagina of a young girl who has not gone through puberty can easily become infected and irritated.

In young girls, the vagina is close to the anus and the vulva lacks the protective labial fat and pubic hair of an adult. Also, as children become more independent, they often lack the skills and knowledge to effectively clean themselves well, resulting in poor hygiene. Children with vulvovaginitis may complain of pain, itching, and burning around the vagina, or vaginal discharge and pain when urinating.

What causes vulvovaginitis?
There are many causes of vulvovaginitis in children. Causes include:

- Irritation of the genital area due to detergents, harsh soaps, chemicals (chlorine, bubble bath), poor hygiene practices or tight clothing
- Infections, with bacteria or yeast
- Pinworm
- Contact irritants
- Skin diseases
- Foreign body

Treatment and Prevention
The treatment of vulvovaginitis is based on the specific cause and medications are prescribed when needed. Since most vulvovaginitis is set off by poor hygiene, it is important to assist the child with good cleaning habits as they learn to clean themselves. Symptoms will usually improve in a couple of weeks.

Good hygiene habits to teach children:

- Teach your child to wipe from front to back after bowel movements and urination.
- Do not use bubble bath in the bathtub.
- Do not shampoo your child's hair in the bathtub.
- Have your child wear white cotton underpants and change them frequently. Have the child sleep without underwear. For infants, change diapers frequently and leave open to the air for 10 minutes.
- Do not dress your child in nylon underwear, tight jeans or slacks, pantyhose and tights.
- Change your child's bathing suit as soon as finished swimming.
- Pat pubic hair dry (or teach your child to do this) or air dry after bathing. Do not rub.
- Do not use perfumed powders and sprays, bath beads and gels.
- Stop using bleach and fabric softeners.
- Rinse underwear thoroughly to remove all soap powders.
- Have your child urinate in the bathtub if it hurts to go to the bathroom.
- Urinate after pulling underwear down to the ankles while spreading the legs with support to the feet (a stool). Pat labia dry, don't rub.
- Use a mild hypoallergenic soap, such as Dove®, Basis®, Neutrogena® or Dial®. Avoid deodorant soaps.
Specific Treatments

Sitz Baths

- Vinegar baths - Dilute one cup of white vinegar in clear bath water twice a day if ordered by the care provider.
- Baking Soda baths - Mix 4 tablespoons of baking soda into clear bath water twice a day if recommended by the care provider.
- Put vaseline outside vagina after soaks (over-the-counter), or your care provider may prescribe premarin cream.

Topical Creams / Ointments

- Steroid cream (                 ) - apply a thin layer twice a day for (       ) weeks.
- Premarin cream - apply a thin layer twice a day for (     ) weeks.