

WSWH informational handout - - **Guidelines for Vulvar Skin Care**

The goal is to promote healthy vulvar skin. This is done by removing chemicals and friction that may increase symptoms of itch burning and irritation. The following recommendations are not all encompassing but are a good start to promoting healthy skin. Generally speaking, the fewer “chemicals” your skin comes in contact with, the better.

LAUNDRY PRODUCTS:

1. Use a detergent free of dyes and perfumes. Seventh Generation, Eos and All Free and Clear are good products. Do not use fabric softeners or bleach. If dryer sheets are needed in the winter, there are some made without fragrance. If washers and dryers are shared with others not using fragrance free products, consider washing underwear by hand and hanging underwear to dry.
2. Use 1/3 to 1/2 the recommended soap for each load. 2 tablespoons of detergent are all you need for a front load machine! A little goes a long way!

CLOTHING:

1. Breathable material is your friend. Quick dry underwear (and bras!) are comfortable for all women but are a lifesaver for those with vulvar issues. title9sports.com has a huge selection of products and they have a liberal return policy. **REI** and **Jockey** also produce these underwear products.
3. If possible, try to not wear daily mini-pads or pads. It is always better to have a change of underwear in a baggy in your purse. Keeping air circulation going is key!
4. Avoid **ALWAYS** pads and mini-pads. Many people report allergic reactions to these. There are tampons and pads that have no bleach and no fragrance available at Trader Joes, Whole Foods and of course, Amazon. There are new “period friendly” underwear on the market (**Thinx**). I have not used them but have heard good things. If you are a patient that has used them, let me know how you feel about them.
5. Avoid pantyhose. Try using thigh high hose if they have to be worn.
6. Decreasing friction is important to decrease vulvar symptoms. Be mindful of how you feel in your clothes and if they are making you more uncomfortable, wear something that is less irritating.
7. Get out of bathing suits as soon as can and rinse chlorine off of your body. Remember if you are at the gym to bring your soap from home, or use plain water.

SOAPS:

1. Refrain from using anything that contains fragrance on the vulva. Fragrance, even if it is labeled “natural” can be an irritant. First thought should be that less is more. Water only is an acceptable to keep the vulva clean but if you feel like you need to use soap, we recommend **Basis soap** for sensitive skin. It is inexpensive, comes in a bar and can be used on your whole body and lasts a long time. It can be bought at drugstores, Target or Walmart. You may need to ask the pharmacist because it is usually behind the counter. It is easy to buy a 6 pack on Amazon. Other possible alternatives are **Dove for sensitive skin** and **Aveeno**. **Dove** has moisturizers in it so some women may need to use something else on the face.

BATHING:

1. Baths are great for the skin but remember to not use bubbles or fragranced oils. Epsom salts or baking soda added to the bath may be used.
8. Do not scrub the vulva, only use your hand to wash.
9. Use only unscented moisturizers or oils after the bath or shower. **Neutrogena** makes a non-fragranced sesame oil, **Cetaphil** and **Eucerin** has moisturizers. Do **not** apply to vulvar tissue.