

## Vulval Skincare Information

This leaflet gives general advice on vulval skin care. It does not cover specific skin conditions.

The skin of the vulva is sensitive. There are things you can do to keep your vulva healthy. These tips can help with itching, dryness, or soreness. Healthy skin can also fight infection.

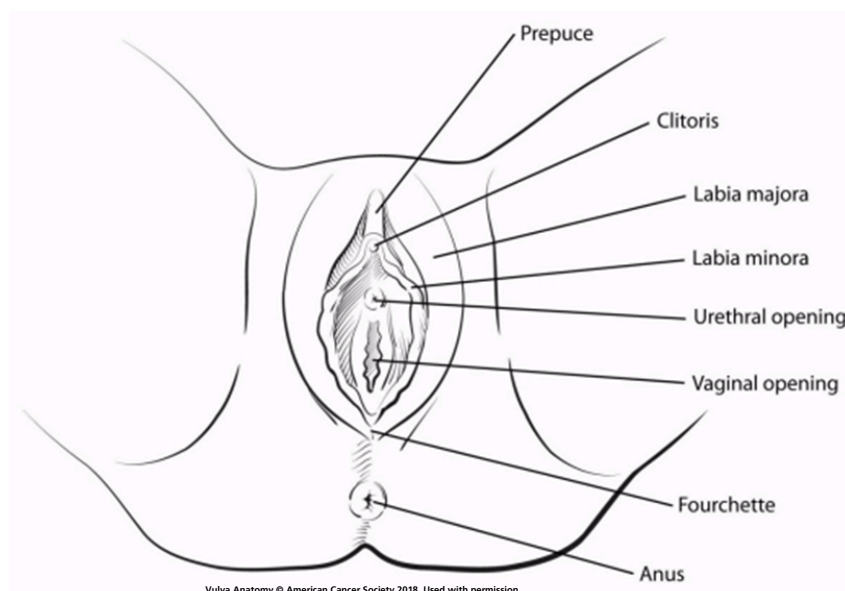
### What is the vulva?

The vulva is the name given to describe the parts of the genitals that can be seen. It is the area around the opening of the vagina. It includes the labia (inner and outer lips) and the clitoris.

Below are some examples of what your vulva might look like. All vulvas look slightly different. That's normal!



Vulval graphics courtesy of Katie Bolton©



Vulva Anatomy © American Cancer Society 2018. Used with permission.

## How to use a soap substitute

Vulval skin is thin and fragile. It does not like soaps or other feminine hygiene products. Instead of soap, use an emollient cream.

Apply the emollient to the vulva before you shower or bath. This stops other products from touching the skin and protects it. It also moisturises the vulval skin. At the end of the shower wash off with clean water. Then dab dry. If the skin feels itchy you can add more emollient cream during the day.

It is important to continue using the emollient even when the symptoms have settled. This helps stop the symptoms from coming back.

Examples of emollients are Hydromol ointment, Diprobase, Doublebase, and Cetraben.

	Do 	Don't 
<b>Washing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use emollient creams as soap substitutes.</li><li>• Use your hands to clean your vulva.</li><li>• Wash only once a day. Over-cleaning can make symptoms worse.</li><li>• Dab dry with a soft towel.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Don't use soaps, bubble baths, or shower gels.</li><li>• Avoid "feminine" washes and sprays.</li><li>• Avoid washing the vulva with sponges, or cloths.</li><li>• Do not wash inside the vagina (douching).</li><li>• Avoid washing your hair while sitting in the bath.</li></ul>
<b>Clothes and laundry</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wear cotton underwear.</li><li>• Wash underwear with non-biological products.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Avoid wearing synthetic fabrics.</li><li>• Avoid wearing tight clothing.</li><li>• Avoid wearing underwear when sleeping.</li><li>• Avoid fabric conditioners and biological washing powders.</li></ul>
<b>Toileting, periods and sex</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use tampons or use Moon Cups during your periods, instead of pads (if possible).</li><li>• Wipe from front to back on the toilet.</li><li>• Use water-based lubricants for sex.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Don't use sanitary pads or panty liners daily.</li><li>• Avoid shaving or waxing your pubic hair, trimming is better.</li></ul>

### General

- Avoid scratching. This damages the skin and makes it sore.
- If you have lots of itching, you can buy antihistamines (anti-allergy) tablets over the counter. Just take these when you need them.