

## Gynaecology Department

# General vulval care and emollients

### Use of emollients to protect your skin

Emollients can be used as moisturisers throughout the day. These products can be bought in 500g tubs or in smaller tubes over the counter or on prescription from your GP. Using one of these moisturisers every day can help relieve symptoms. Even when you do not have symptoms, using a moisturiser will protect the skin and can prevent flare-ups.

All of these creams are safe to use frequently and do not contain any active drugs or steroids.

If your skin is irritated, emollient cream can be kept in the fridge and dabbed on to cool and soothe the skin as often as you like.

It is important to find the moisturiser that suits you best. If the first one you try does not work well, it is well worth trying another one.

### Some examples of emollient creams include:

- Cetraben cream and or ointment
- Hydramol cream and or ointment
- E45 cream
- Diprobase cream



### General vulval care

The following are useful measures for all women with vulval conditions:

- Washing with water on its own causes dry skin and makes itching worse. Use your emollient cream as a soap substitute to clean the vulval area. Apply the cream to the vulval area prior to showering as it will act as a barrier to soap/shower gel and at the end of your shower wash off the cream with your hand. This will stop the skin from getting as dry and irritated as it would if you used soap or water alone.
- Shower rather than have a bath and clean the vulval area only once a day. Over cleaning can aggravate vulval symptoms. If you use a bath, it is helpful to add a bath emollient.
- Avoid using sponges or flannels to wash the vulva. These can irritate your skin. Gently dab the vulval area dry with a soft towel or use a hairdryer on a cool setting held well away from the skin.
- Wear loose-fitting silk or cotton underwear. Close-fitting clothes such as tights, cycling shorts, leggings or tight jeans should be avoided. Wear loose-fitting trousers or skirts and replace tights with stockings. At home, you may find it more comfortable to wear long skirts without underwear.
- Sleep without underwear.
- Avoid fabric conditioners and biological washing powders. You may want to try washing your underwear separately in a non-biological washing powder/gel.
- Avoid soaps, shower gel, scrubs, bubble baths, deodorants, baby wipes or douches in the vulval area.
- Some over-the-counter creams including baby or nappy creams, herbal creams (e.g. tea tree oil, aloe vera) and 'thrush' treatments may include possible irritants.
- Avoid wearing panty liners or sanitary towels on a regular basis.
- Avoid antiseptic (as a cream or added to bath water) in the vulval area.
- Wear white or light colours of underwear. Dark textile dyes (black, navy) may cause an allergy; if you wash new dark underwear a few times before wearing it, it will be less likely to cause a problem.
- Avoid coloured toilet paper.
- Avoid wearing nail varnish on finger nails if you tend to scratch your skin.

## Patient Information

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact 024 7696 7222 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

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