



# Kiwi Pediatrics

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## Vulvovaginitis

### What is it?

Vulvovaginitis is irritation of the vagina and surrounding area. It can present as redness, itching, burning on urination, and discharge. The most common cause is irritation or inadequate wiping after voiding in children.

### Who is at risk?

Younger girls are most likely to be affected as they have delicate skin in the genital area and it is easily irritated. The opening of vagina is closer to the anus which increases the risk of bugs from the intestinal tract coming in contact with this area of delicate skin. Girls may wipe back to front which can then spread these bugs further. Sometimes the skin can become irritated through normal daily activities such as playing in sand, on slides, or teeter-totters. Wearing tight leotards or wet bathing suits can result in direct rubbing in the area, but also limits air flow which can add to the local moisture level, causing further symptoms. Finally, many children with explore their own bodies and masturbation is not uncommon. As this is a normal behaviour in children, teaching them about hygiene is the most important factor.

### How to treat?

1. **Avoid irritation:** Avoid bubble baths. Use gentle unscented soap at the end of bath time (to avoid prolonged contact). Ensure the genital area is rinsed with water after washing it. Avoid fabric softener.
2. **Proper Hygiene :** Wipe front to back. Self-stimulation/masturbation can worsen irritation.
3. **Avoid excessive moisture:** Pat (not rub) to dry after bath. Can dry well for 20 seconds with blowdryer. Avoid clothes that are tight fitting (such as tights, leotards, form fitting clothing, tight panties). Encourage wearing dresses and loose cotton panties. Encourage sleeping in a nightgown with no panties.
4. **Cream when irritated:** Use protective cream (like zinc based diaper creams) on a cotton ball between the labia after each toilet use. Can provide a sitz bath (where person sits in water up to their hips) twice a day in warm water to soothe skin (will need to dry the area as above afterwards).

## Other considerations

Children who have a burning sensation when peeing may have a urinary tract infection (UTI). They will need to be seen by a physician who will likely dip a urine sample. This test is likely to be positive in children who have a UTI and those who have vulvovaginitis. To confirm the presence of a true urinary infection a sample must be sent to the lab for culture.