Vulvar Care and Suggestions to Aid in Vulvar Pain and Itching

Careful care of the vulva can help alleviate some symptoms of itching, burning and irritation since the vulvar skin can be quite sensitive. Because the vulva is moist and frequently subjected to friction while sitting and moving, this area can be easily injured. There are various strategies that can be used to prevent increased irritation and allow the vulva to feel better. Below is a list of a number of techniques to assist you in becoming more comfortable.

1. **Avoid contact irritants**: this includes any product that has soaps, perfumes and detergents like fabric softener, deodorant soap, bubble bath, feminine hygiene spray, scented or deodorized menstrual products and scented bath products. We do not endorse the use of Vagisil, an over the counter product used for “feminine hygiene and itching.”

2. **Wear 100% cotton underwear**: enclosing the vulva in synthetic products holds both heat and moisture, conditions that potentiate many vulvar conditions. Avoid the use of panty hose, thongs, tights or other close fitting clothes for similar reasons. If you need to wear panty hose, cut the crotch out of the nylons to reduce the clinginess to the body.

3. **Rinse the skin off with plain water**: use tap water, distilled water, sitz baths, squirt bottles or bidets. Pat the skin gently dry or dry with a cool hair dryer.

4. **Use mild soap**: If you prefer to use a soap on the vulva, use a mild one such as Neutrogena, Basis, Pears (made in England), Cetaphil (non-fragranced) or castile soap with olive oil (Conti). These are found at most pharmacies or health food stores. Remember that frequent baths with soap may increase irritation. As a reminder, it may be best to avoid soaps altogether and just rinse with plain water.

5. **Try a compress of oiled Aveeno**: Aveeno is an anti-irritant that comes in many forms. You can try a compress made with the powdered oatmeal bath treatment. Place 2 tablespoons of Aveeno in 1-2 pints of water. Mix in a jar and refrigerate. You can apply this to the vulva 3-4 times a day as needed. Some find it helpful after intercourse when symptoms can typically flare.

6. **Try cool tea bags**: There is some therapeutic effect to plain black tea bags applied to inflamed tissue. This is true for the vulva as well. The tea bags should be applied directly to the skin and may be held in place with a menstrual pad.

7. **Always use lubricants with sexual activity**: Avoid the use of K-Y jelly, which can be tacky and sticky. Instead, try other water-based lubricants such as Astroglide, FemGlide, Wet, or Slippery Stuff. If you are not using latex barriers (condoms or diaphragm) as contraception, you may use bland oil. Some find this
a nice alternative that is soothing, slippery and moisturizing. You may try mineral oil or olive oil. Some Kama Sutra oils have flavors, scents, and sensation enhancers and can therefore be more activating to the vulvar skin.

8. **Other suggestions:** try to avoid sitting in a wet bathing suit or damp gym clothes. Do not douche. Avoid contraceptive devices that require spermicides that can further irritate the skin.

9. **Leave the vulva uncovered:** Allowing the vulva to be free of clothing and underwear can increase comfort. Generally, it is left uncovered in the evening and during the night.