

General Skin Care Recommendations (downloaded from BCW MVP)

These suggestions are a starting point for women with vulvar pain, itchiness or cracks in the skin.

Be careful about what you apply to your skin.

- o Avoid chemicals that can irritate the vulvar skin, such as soap, douches, perfumes, and over-the-counter vaginal preparations or feminine hygiene spray.
- o Do not use bar soap. Use soap substitutes (Use gentle cleansers that are labeled “hypoallergenic” like Cetaphil, Dove or Aveeno brands.)

Be careful about what comes into contact with your skin.

- o Do not add fabric softener to clothes.
- o Do NOT use synthetic panty-liners for menstruation or daily wear.
- o Use 100% Cotton pads (Natracare pads or tampons). Or use a menstrual cup – Diva Cup, Keeper cup (rubber) or Moon cup (silicone). Reusable cotton pads are available through many health food stores, or can be ordered from Glad Rags - gladrags.com or Luna Pads: lunapads.com
- o Avoid synthetic material - use cotton underwear, pantyhose with cotton panels.
- o Wear loose clothing that encourages the air to circulate. Sleep without underwear.

Improve the condition of your skin

- o For optimal skin care use a moisturizer after a shower on the vulvar skin. Examples of good moisturizers include Clinaderm, Lubriderm, and Glaxal base.
- o Examples of organic moisturizer include Aloe and Calendula.
- o Use a protective barrier such as Vaseline jelly, Creamy Vaseline or Penaten cream on sensitive skin areas.
- o Please be extra careful if you are grooming your hair. Follow basic principles and techniques as recommended below.

Use a lubricant with sexual activity to reduce the friction against vulvar and vaginal skin.

- o Water based: KY Personal, Astroglide, Slippery Stuff, Good Clean Love
- o Oil based: Mineral, almond, coconut, olive or calendula oil.
- o Silicone based: Eros Women, Pink, Millennium, Platinum.
- o Vaginal moisturizers: Replens, RepaGyn, Gynatrof, Feminease, KY liquibeads, Vitamin E suppositories, Hyalofemme
- o All the mentioned products can be bought discreetly online. Such as Amazon.ca. Local pharmacies may have them for over the counter purchase.

For symptom relief

- o If the discomfort with sexual intercourse is mild try applying a freezing gel (xylocaine2%) to the vestibule 5 minutes prior to intercourse (requires a prescription)
- o For swelling or itching, sit on the toilet and pour cool water over the vulva. Some women find applying a cold ice pack or gel pack to the vulva for 5 minutes helps.

Additional information at <https://www.ottawahospital.on.ca/en/documents/2017/01/vulvar-care-e.pdf>, and <http://mvprogram.org>.

CHOICES FOR REMOVING PUBIC HAIR – ALWAYS CONSIDER SAFETY FIRST

The vast majority of adults remove hair that is unwanted. Which hair you want to remove, and how to do it, should be based on personal preference, cost and safety. It's not compulsory to remove the hair in this area to keep your body clean. In fact, **there are no health benefits to removing pubic hair.**

According to a recent publication in the American Medical Association Journal, the majority of women (80 percent) and most men (67 percent) trim down there. But a quarter of groomers suffered substantial injuries, more common among younger people. Lacerations or cuts were the most common injury, followed by burning, rashes and infection in the hair root (folliculitis). Shaving can help the spread of viral warts (caused by HPV) or another virus called molluscum contagiosum. The most dangerous technique causing the greatest damage seems to be lying on your back and having somebody else groom your pubic hair!

REMOVAL CHOICES – TEMPORARY HAIR REMOVAL

SHAVING is the most commonly used method for hair removal. It is cheap, effective and easy to perform. Investing in good tools such as scissors, straight razors, or multiple blade safety razors, electric shavers, shaving cream or gel is advisable. Shaving only removes the hair down to just below the surface of the skin, not the root. Shaving does not make the hair grow back thicker.

Safety Guidelines when Shaving Pubic Hair:

1. **Use a hand mirror** so you can see the area you want to shave.
2. **Trim as much hair as possible before** you begin shaving – DON'T use a dull pair of scissors.
3. **Soak in the tub** for at least 5 minutes to soften the skin and pubic hair before you shave.
4. **Apply shaving cream** or gel with aloe vera, aveeno cream, or another soothing agent (made for women) over all the areas you plan to shave. Reapply as needed.
5. **Use a new/sharp razor or "bikini" razor** – DON'T use a dull blade. Try a razor with a built-in moisturizing strip.
6. **Hold the skin tight with one hand and shave with the other hand.** Avoid using too much pressure.
7. **Rinse your skin with warm water** after you are done shaving and then pat dry.
8. **Apply baby oil or lotion with aloe vera** to the shaved area when you're done. Avoid scented products because they may sting your skin

DEPILATORY CREAMS involve the use of a chemical agent to basically dissolve the hair. The active ingredients in most products are thioglycolates, with the end result being the dissolution of the hair into a gelatin form, which can be wiped or scraped away. Depilatories creams are painless and work well, but the **results do not usually last longer than two weeks.** Since most depilatories are sulfur-containing compounds, the odor produced can be unpleasant.

Irritant or allergic skin irritation can occur as a result of the sulfur component in addition to added coloring and fragrances. Different strengths and compounds can be tried if irritation

occurs. Be sure to read the product label first to make sure it is safe to use on your vulva, and follow the directions exactly and in order.

WAXING involves applying a layer of wax to the area where hair removal is desired. When the wax is pulled off (it usually stings) the trapped hairs are pulled out. **Hair can remain absent for 6-8 weeks.** Waxing can be performed with either a molten wax or a room temperature liquid wax (called cold wax). The hot wax treatment causes follicular dilatation allowing entire hairs to be removed down to the bulb. **it's best to have it done at a salon or spa that offers waxing as a regular service,** as it may burn the skin.

REMOVAL CHOICES – PERMANENT HAIR REMOVAL

LASER HAIR REMOVAL: Laser hair removal is a procedure that uses a strong beam of light that penetrates the skin to destroy the hair follicle. Results can vary from person to person, but total removal of hair is uncommon, and realistic expectations include less hair, lighter hair, and thinner hair. In general, dark hair responds best. Patients typically require four to six treatments spaced approximately four to six weeks apart in order to achieve satisfactory hair removal. Once these sessions are completed, patients may require maintenance treatments once every 6 to 12 months to remove the smaller vellus hairs that may grow back.

Laser can cause irritation and pigment changes. In addition, pain, redness, blistering, and scarring are possible. Home lasers are available as well, but more research is needed before recommending them. Results appear modest, and complications can occur.

ELECTROLYSIS: Electrolysis, if performed properly, is supposedly the only method that permanently removes the hair, although there is a 10-25% regrowth at the end of 6 months. A very fine needle shaped electrode is used to destroy the hair root. It usually takes many sessions to completely remove all the hair roots and the cost can vary depending on the location and other factors. It can cause redness and pigment changes; it involves tissue destruction, and scarring is possible. Electrolysis can be painful, and topical anesthetic creams may be helpful in reducing pain. It may promote a flare up of herpes virus.

Consider all your options, especially when agreeing to have the more permanent procedures. If you are just shaving, proper equipment and technique are paramount. For the other procedures, consult with an expert first, and rather get a professional to carry out the procedure for you. I hope this helps to reduce injuries to a very sensitive area.

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