Hygiene

- DO NOT OVERWASH THE AREA. Treat the genital area very gently as the skin is thin.
- While there are symptoms, do not use soap for washing. Ask your pharmacist for a soap substitute such as those suitable for use in eczema or dry skin (e.g., Oilatum bath).
- Don't use a lot of soap in the bath/shower and make sure it is well rinsed from the area.
- Avoid getting shampoo on the vulval area.
- Do not use bubble bath, antiseptics, perfumed soaps or creams.
- Some people find vinegar baths helpful (add 1/2 cup white vinegar to a shallow bath – enough so you can taste the vinegar - and soak for 10 to 15 minutes). Splash the vinegar bathwater vigorously around the area by kicking the legs and doing ballet in the bath. Do this daily for a few days and see if it helps your daughter. If it helps, this can be as often as twice a day or less often such as weekly depending on how bad the symptoms are.
- Salt baths can help too – add enough table salt to make the water taste salty. Add the salt after your child is in the bath to prevent stinging.
- When the symptoms have improved, washing with plain water may be enough for good hygiene.
- Wee before the bladder is full, avoid 'hanging on' and rinse with water after weeing.
- Use soft, white, unscented toilet paper.

Treatment of the soreness

- Cold compresses can help soothe the area.
- Only use medication on the genitals that is meant to be used on this area because the skin is more sensitive than other skin.
- Soothing creams may help settle the soreness, waterproof and protect the skin from the discharge which can be irritating.
  o Usually only a nappy cream such as sudocrem or bepanthen is necessary
- In severe cases, oestrogen cream may be considered - this can only be for short term use and is not recommended in most cases.

You may have to repeat simple measures if the problem comes back.

Vulvovaginitis - Important Points

- It is very common in young girls and will often come and go without treatment
- It is often mistaken for thrush or urine infections
- Protecting the area from irritation is the best treatment

Vulvovaginitis in children

Where can I find more information?
www.nhs.uk/conditions

Who can I contact if I am worried?
Community Nursing Team: 01204 463939
(Patients with a Bolton GP only)
Ask your GP for more information or for the contact details of your local team

F5 Ward – 01204 390715
E5 Ward – 01204 390405
What is vulvovaginitis?
Vulvovaginitis is inflammation or irritation of the vagina and vulva (the opening of the vagina).

Who gets vulvovaginitis?
Mild vulvovaginitis is a very common problem in young girls. It will affect most girls at some stage. Some girls will have vulvovaginitis many times. As girls begin to develop breasts, their vulvovaginitis usually gets better. In most girls vulvovaginitis is not a serious problem and it will usually improve with simple steps. In most cases no treatment or tests are needed.

What are the signs and symptoms?
Girls may have any or all of these:
- Itching in the vaginal area
- Some discharge from the vagina
- Redness of the skin between the outside lips of the vagina (labia majora)
- Burning or stinging when weeing

Because of the stinging when weeing, many girls are mistakenly diagnosed with a urine infection. Wee comes out through a tube called the urethra and the end of this is within the sore area. This causes the stinging and may also cause some blood or white cells to show up on a stick test if the urine if it is tested.

What causes vulvovaginitis?
- The lining of the area can be quite thin in young girls and this can lead to it being easily irritated.
- Before puberty the vagina is not as acidic and this makes it easier for bacteria to grow.
- Dampness around the vulva - if the area cannot dry out properly, this makes it worse. It is harder to get air to the area if girls wear tight clothing or if they are overweight. Vulvovaginitis is also worse in girls who wet in the day or night.
- Irritants such as soaps and bubble baths.
- Hygiene. Bacteria (bugs) spread easily from the bottom to the front area. Wiping from front to back helps to prevent this, but it is difficult to get perfect hygiene in little girls.
- Constipation can cause or worsen vulvovaginitis. Parents may not always know their child is constipated. It is usually caused by children holding on to their poo as they are too busy or don't want to poo. Signs include:-
  o Going for a poo less than once every day
  o Passing large poos
  o Straining to poo
  If your child has signs of constipation they should be offered advice and treatment with gentle laxatives if needed.
- Threadworms sometimes cause or worsen vulvovaginitis. Children with threadworms often scratch a lot at night. If itching is a problem, ask your pharmacist about treatment for threadworms.

Are any tests needed?
In cases where it is troublesome, the doctor may advise a swab of the area be taken for testing, but the results are not always helpful.

Could it be thrush?
Vaginal thrush is common in girls and adults after they go through puberty but is very uncommon in children before puberty. Thrush treatment has often been tried and does not usually help.

How can you treat vulvovaginitis?
Firstly try not to worry, this is a common problem and a normal part of growing up for many girls. In most mild cases, no treatment is needed.

General advice
- Look at your child's weight and get some advice if she is overweight for age and height.

Clothing and laundry
- Wear loose cotton underwear.
- Don't wear tights and avoid tight trousers.
- Ensure that underwear is rinsed well
- Do not use fabric softener on underwear

Physical activities
- Avoid activities that put direct pressure on the vulva, such as bike riding or horse-riding.
- Avoid hot tubs and over-chlorinated pools
- Avoid long periods of sitting.