



VULVOVAGINAL DISORDERS

A PATHWAY TO DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT

ANAL CARE

What skin changes can happen in the anal area?

The anal area is often involved with itching and irritation. These symptoms may be related to skin diseases or the presence of yeast. Care after bowel movements is also important.

If there is anal irritation, what can be done?

If there is anal irritation, care begins by avoiding all possible causative agents such as thongs and daily panty liners or sanitary pads, harsh soap, rough wash cloths, hemorrhoidal agents, baby or adult wet wipes, and any creams and ointments purchased over the counter. Frequent use of toilet paper, wet or dry, may also add to irritation. Frequent bowel movements, constipation, diarrhea, or release of small particles of stool with the passage of gas may all contribute to discomfort.

What is “soak and seal?”

“Soak and Seal” is basic skin care recommended by dermatologists to restore water (“soak”) to any problem skin area and then “seal” in the moisture. Begin treatment with soaks in the tub or on a sitz bath container that fits under the toilet seat (lift both the lid and the seat and place sitz bath into the top of the toilet), or rinses with a hand-held shower. Use plain, warm water for **five** minutes, twice a day, for at least a week. Longer soaks are not necessary; hot water dries and damages the skin. After the soak, pat dry gently, and apply any prescription that your clinician has suggested. Plain petroleum jelly (Vaseline®) is recommended for general use as both a moisturizer and barrier to protect the skin. Common legends that Vaseline harms the skin or traps bacteria or “makes things worse” are **not true**.

What is the best way to cleanse after bowel movements?

Be gentle. To avoid scraping and digging with toilet paper, use a soft tissue with a small dab of Vaseline®, mineral oil, or over-the-counter Albolene cleanser. This is similar to removing make-up with cleansing cream. Carry these materials (tissues and a tube or small bottle of moisturizer) in your bag so that they are always available. Use the first and second application of toilet tissue to clean, then a third to add the cleanser/moisturizer.

What if symptoms persist?

Since symptoms of itching, irritation, or stinging can accompany some skin disorders, if gentle care does not improve how you feel, make an appointment to see a clinician.