

## VAGINITIS

Vaginitis refers to an inflammation or irritation of the vulva ("lips" on either side of the vagina) and/or the vagina itself. Your daughter may complain of itching, soreness, or pain with urination, and you may notice redness and some discharge from the vagina.

Vaginitis may be caused by an infection, physical irritation, or "allergy" or sensitivity to a chemical that has come into contact with her genital area.

*Infection:* Some infections require specific medicines. Most are caused by the bacteria that are found normally in her stool and can be treated successfully by the local care outlined below. Occasionally, your doctor may take a swab of vaginal discharge to send to the lab to identify the type of infection.

*Irritation:* This may be from tight fitting clothing (jeans), clothing that "rides up" into the crotch (leotards, bathing suits), constant wetness (wet bathing suits, urinary accidents), or clothing that does not "breathe" well (polyesters or nylon panties, pantyhose). Excessive masturbation, foreign body insertion, or sexual abuse should also be considered. If you have any suspicions that your child has been molested, please bring this to your doctor's attention.

*"Allergy":* Common sources include bubble bath, shampoo or hair conditioner used in the tub, or scented or dyed toilet paper.

### Treatment

1. Mother should re-instruct the child on proper wiping techniques at the toilet. Always wipe from front to back to avoid getting feces into the vagina.
2. Twice a day, she should soak her bottom in a tub of warm water with no added soap. You may add 1/2 cup of white vinegar to the tub. Have her spread her legs apart and use a clean washcloth to remove any discharge or cheesy material from the vaginal folds. Blot dry with a clean towel. Leave the area exposed to the warm, dry room air for 15 minutes after bathing.
3. Use only white, unscented toilet paper.
4. Do not use bubble bath or scented soaps. Wash her hair in

the sink, in the shower, or have her leave the bathtub as soon as the shampoo is rinsed from her hair rather than sitting in the water where the scents and dyes used in the shampoo may irritate her vagina.

5. She should wear loose fitting, white cotton panties. Encourage her not to wear panties at night. If there is a vaginal discharge, she should change panties two or three times a day.

6. Avoid clothes that are tight in the crotch such as jeans, leotards, or bathing suits. Dresses or skirts allow circulation of air and avoid build-up of heat and moisture.

7. Do not let her sit in a sandbox to play unless wearing clothes that won't permit sand to enter.

8. Make certain that your daughter understands the issue of sexual molestation. Some books on this subject are:

- a) *Sexual Abuse-Alerting Kids to the Danger Zone* - Joy Berry
- b) *Anna's Secret* - Linda Ezrine
- c) *Speak Up, Say No!* - Elaine Krause
- d) *It's OK to Say No* - Playmore, Inc.
- e) *No More Secrets for Me* - Oralee Wachter
- f) *Private Zone* - Frances Dayee

9. Call for another appointment if there is no improvement in three to four days on the above treatment or if there is a brownish or bloody vaginal discharge.

