

Vaginal Itching

Cause

- Main cause in young girls: a soap irritation of the vulva or outer vagina (soap vulvitis) from bubble bath, shampoo or other soap
- Soap vulvitis occurs exclusively prior to puberty.
- Occasionally, it is due to poor hygiene or back to front wiping.
- If the vagina becomes secondarily [infected](#), a vaginal discharge will occur.

Care Advice

1. Reassurance:
 - a. Soap (especially bubble bath) is the most common cause of genital itching in young girls.
 - b. The vulva is very sensitive to the drying effect of soap.
 - c. After puberty, soap can be tolerated.
2. Baking Soda-Warm Water Soaks:
 - a. Soak for 20 minutes to remove irritants and to promote healing.
 - b. Add 2 ounces (60 ml) baking soda per tub of warm water (Reason: Baking soda is better than vinegar for girls not into puberty).
 - c. During soaks, be sure she spreads her legs and allows the water to cleanse the genital area.
 - d. Repeat baking soda soaks treatment 2 times per day for 2 days.
3. Steroid Cream: Apply small amount of 1% hydrocortisone cream (no prescription needed) to the genital area after soaks for 1 or 2 days.
4. Avoid Soaps: Avoid bubble bath, soap and shampoo to the vulva because they are irritants. Only use warm water to cleanse the vulva or baby oil to remove secretions.
5. Expected Course: If the symptoms are due to soap vulvitis, they should all clear within 1 to 2 days with proper treatment.

When To Call

Call Your Doctor Now (night or day) If

- Your child looks or acts very sick
- Could be from [sexual abuse](#)
- Vaginal bleeding



Call Your Doctor Within 24 Hours (between 9 am and 4 pm) If

- You think your child needs to be seen
- Vaginal discharge
- Fever is present

Call Your Doctor During Weekday Office Hours If

- You have other questions or concerns
- Over age 10 (reason: soap vulvitis is unusual)
- Vaginal irritation persists on treatment over 2 days

Adapted from The American Academy of Pediatrics (2011) at www.healthychildren.org

