

Self Care Practices For Pelvic Pain And Vulvodynia

Practices that may be helpful

Women with pelvic pain and vulvodynia will integrate self-care practices as a means of controlling pain and perineal irritation. In women with vulvar irritation, the following hygiene practices may be helpful

1. Rinse underclothes carefully after washing.
2. Rinse perineal and vulvar area after voiding using a squirt bottle, bidet or shower spray. Use mild soap for bathing.
3. Wash new underclothes before wearing, rinsing without fabric softener
4. Wear only white, 100% cotton underwear.
5. Use soft toilet tissue – white preferred.
6. Use non-deodorized, 100% cotton for tampons and menstrual pads.
7. Use cornstarch powder after bathing, before dressing and at bedtime.
8. Heat in the form of a heating pad applied to the area of pain, soaking in a tub bath (e.g. Aveeno bath) or the application of hot compresses to the pain site are common practices. Moist heat is effective in decreasing muscle spasm and trigger point tension, and improving circulation.
9. Leave vulvar area uncovered at night (e.g. no underwear) to allow adequate exposure to the air.

Practices to Avoid

1. Minimize perineal scratching
2. Use of perfumed soaps and powder
3. Wearing of synthetic fibers such as nylon (e.g. pantyhose or tights) or rayon, which hold both heat and moisture against the skin.
4. Use of perineal pads (Kotex, Modess, etc.)
5. Sitting in wet clothing for any period of time (i.e., wet bathing suit)
6. Chemicals found in toilet tissue, laundry soaps and detergents that come in contact with the vulva. Irritants include fabric softeners in undergarments, chemicals in deodorant soaps, bubble baths, feminine hygiene sprays and panty liners, etc.
7. Swimming in heavy chlorinated pools or hot tubs

Can Vitamins Be Helpful?

Calcium citrate, a compound known to treat hyperoxaluria and inhibit hyaluronidase release, has been extremely helpful in reducing symptoms. Citrate has a structure similar to oxalate and competes with it in the tissues. In about three months of citrate and diet together, a 70% reduction in can be seen. Calcium citrate can be irritating if used in excess, and therefore dosages often must be reduced and readjusted. It is recommended that calcium citrate without Vitamin D, two tablets (200mg) taken orally three times a day will neutralize oxalate in the urine. Combining a low oxalate diet and ingestion of calcium oxalate may be most effective for those patients with vulvodynia.