

# Vulvar Area Skin Care Tips

*For women after a vulvectomy*

## If your surgical area (where the stitches are) is itchy:

- Try rinsing with cool water, or place an ice pack. Apply no longer than 10 minutes at a time.
- Use a sitz bath. Ask us for instructions, or search “sitz bath” on [www.rvh.on.ca](http://www.rvh.on.ca).



Sitz Bath

Photo credit: [www.sitzbathguide.com](http://www.sitzbathguide.com)

## When cleaning the surgical area (where the stitches are):

- Cleaning with warm water is all you need.
- After a bath or shower, pat gently to dry or leave to air dry.
- Avoid soaps, douches, perfumes, talc powder, over the counter vaginal preparations or feminine hygiene spray. These products may contain chemicals that can irritate the vulvar skin.



## Note about shaving the vulvar area:

You **do not** need to shave/wax the area in order for you or your doctor to examine your skin. The vulvar skin is sensitive, so shaving and/or waxing the area can be irritating. Instead of shaving or waxing, try trimming your pubic hair with round-tip scissors.



## When urinating (peeing):

- If it hurts to urinate, try rinsing the area with water during or after urination. You can use a squeeze bottle filled with water.
- You can also try sitting in the bathtub, sitz bath or shower to urinate. The water will dilute the acidic urine and make it more comfortable.
- Pat the area gently from front to back with toilet paper.

## **If you have blood coming from the surgical area or if you have your period (menstruation):**

- Use 100% cotton pads when possible. The package should say 100% cotton. Be careful with products that have labels such as “cotton-like cover” or “cotton-like feel” as they may not be made with cotton.
- Do NOT use synthetic panty liners or pads to absorb the blood.
- It is fine to use tampons (cotton or synthetic is ok) unless your surgical site is close to the opening of the vagina.

## **When choosing clothing and underwear:**

- Do NOT add fabric softener to clothing and underwear
- Wear cotton underwear and pantyhose with cotton panels to avoid contact with synthetic materials (e.g. rayon, nylon, polyester). Synthetic materials make it hard for your skin to breathe which slows the healing process.
- Wear loose clothing (such as skirts, dresses or pants) to help the air circulate around the surgical area.
- Try sleeping without underwear.



Wear loose skirts, dresses and pants to help air circulate around the surgical area.

## **When can I start to have sex again?**

You can usually start to have sex about 4-6 weeks after your surgery. Your doctor will let you know when you have completely healed and are ready to have sex.

## **Will sex be different than before?**

When you first start to have sex again, your vulvar area may feel tender or numb. Your vulva may have changed but your vagina, which is inside you, is the same.

If your clitoris was removed, you will have less or no feeling in that area. If that happens, try other areas of your body for sexual pleasure, such as lips, breasts and inner thighs.

Our Sexual Health, Intimacy and Cancer (SHIC) Clinic can help you and your partner with any of your sexual health concerns in a professional, private meeting.

Call 705-728-9090 x43520 to make an appointment.