

Gentle vulvar care

There are A LOT of products out there marketed to women for “feminine hygiene.” Most of these products are not helpful at best and harmful at worst. Here are some helpful tips for minimizing vulvovaginal irritation. It is unlikely that any of these things are directly causing your irritation, so don't be too hard on yourself. Some of these products simply make already established irritation worse. If a product or practice is important to you or your relationship, you can try to re-introduce it once your irritation is improved.

- Wash the vulva no more than once a day, using water only; do not use a washcloth, but only soft fingertips.
- Cut fingernails short to prevent scratching (especially at night).
- Avoid soap, douches, powders, wipes other than [Water Wipes](#) brand, over-the counter medications (especially Vagisil or benzocaine) on this area. If any prescribed topical medications produce burning, stop using them and call your provider
- Do not use panty liners, especially the brand "Always." If you need to use a liner, cloth, reusable menstrual/incontinence pads, and liners, or “period panties” are preferred. You can buy these online at sites such as [Aisle](#) or [Cotton Babies](#). Brands include [Elemum](#), and [Dear Kate](#)
 - If these are too expensive, you can buy fleece from a fabric store and cut into pieces to lie in your undergarments.
 - If you do not have genital pain- with periods, use a menstrual cup or disc rather than pads and tampons if possible. Menstrual cups such as the [Diva Cup](#) or discs such as [nixit](#) are a good choice. Check out the website [Put A Cup In It](#) for a quiz on which cup might be right for you!
- Prevent constipation by adding fiber to your diet through a supplement such as [Benefiber](#). These fiber supplements will not work without the addition of plenty of water to your diet. Docusate ([Colace](#)) 100 mg OTC gel caps can be useful if used in an

ongoing fashion, starting at one once or twice a day and increasing if needed. [Miralax](#) is another non-stimulant laxative that is safe and often effective. Use these ongoing to prevent constipation.

- Apply ice, frozen peas or a [frozen blue gel pack](#) wrapped in a hand towel to relieve burning. But, be careful not to overdo, since frostbite is a real possibility. (10 minutes every hour)
- Use a lubricant with sexual activity. Women with vaginal symptoms tend to be dry.
 - If using latex condoms, try water based products such as [Slippery stuff](#), [Pre-Seed](#), [Good Clean Love: BioNude Ultra Sensitive](#) or silicone based products (not compatible with silicone toys) such as [Sliquid Naturals Silver Silicone](#).
 - If not using latex condoms, try olive oil, vaseline, or vegetable oil (not K-Y) are good choices for a lubricant. Contraceptive creams or spermicides, and latex condoms can be irritating.
- Try applying A LOT of topical anesthetic (Xylocaine or lidocaine - NOT Vagisil or benzocaine) 30 minutes before sexual activity if sexual activity is painful for you.
- Keep cold Vaseline in the fridge and apply a small amount prior to using the bathroom and throughout the day to act as a barrier and prevent irritation.

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