



# Vulvodynia

## Chronic Vulvovaginal Pain

Most women who deal with vulvodynia see several healthcare providers (HCP) before being correctly diagnosed. Discussing the problem becomes embarrassing and frustrating for the women and, for many, they stop reporting it and live with uncomfortable symptoms.

Proper diagnosing will include a thorough medical history and pelvic exam. Cultures for sexual and non-sexual vaginal infections will be collected. Skin disorders and dryness will be ruled out. Vulvodynia may be diagnosed when there are no other explanations for your pain.

### Contributing Factors

---

No one knows the cause of vulvodynia, but some of the following factors may contribute to it:

- Injury/ irritation of the nerves surrounding your vulvar region
- Past vaginal infections
- Allergies/ sensitive skin
- Hormonal changes
- Oral Contraceptives
- Childbirth
- Pelvic Surgery
- Pelvic trauma
- Difficult/unwanted sexual experiences
- Pelvic floor muscle tightness/spasms

### Treatment Options

---

Treatment focuses on relieving symptoms. It may include:

- Lifestyle changes
- Medical treatment
- Therapy- physical, behavioral, sex

No one treatment works for every woman. You may find that a combination of treatments works best for you. It may take weeks or even months of consistent changes for you to notice a difference in your symptoms.

#### Suburban Gynecology

Phone: 815-717-8727 Fax: 815-717-8722

[www.mygyne.net](http://www.mygyne.net)

\*1890 Silver Cross Boulevard, Suite 375, New Lenox, IL 60451

\*16615 S. Route 59, Plainfield, IL 60586

\*15300 West Avenue, Orland Park, IL 60462



# Vulvodynia

## Chronic Vulvovaginal Pain

### Sexual Activity

---

- Avoid warming/ flavored lubricants which may irritate the tissue. Best options are products that are free of paraben and/or glycerin. Ask your pharmacist for assistance.
- Topical anesthetic, such as lidocaine, may be applied 5 minutes before penetration- ask your provider.
- DO NOT use contraceptive creams/ spermicides- they may irritate the tissue.
- Urinate after intercourse, rinse vulva with cool water after urinating.
- Use a cold compress directly to your external genital area if you have pain after sex. Try putting water on a menstrual pad, freezing it and using it for a cold compress.

### Medical Treatments

---

- LOCAL ANESTHETICS-some medications, such as lidocaine, can numb or lessen the symptoms for a short time. Lidocaine may be applied 5 minutes before sexual activity.
- MEDICATIONS- Steroids, Tricyclic antidepressants or anticonvulsants may help lessen chronic pain. Oral, topical, and vaginal options are available.
- NERVE BLOCK- If your vulvar area hasn't responded to other treatments, ask your HCP if nerve block will help. This is an in-office injection of anesthetic directly into the pelvic region.
- SURGERY- For some women who have vestibulodynia, surgery to remove the affected tissue may relieve the pain. This is called a vestibulectomy.
- PELVIC FLOOR THERAPY- Many women with vulvodynia respond to therapy which helps relax tense muscles as well as help improve support of the pelvic floor. Some physical therapists specialize in pelvic floor dysfunction.
- BIOFEEDBACK- teaches you how to relax your pelvic muscles which contract in anticipation of pain, causing chronic pain. This is done by physical therapists as well.

### Activities/ Irritants to AVOID

---

- HOT BATHS/ HOT TUBS: heat may intensify symptoms
- FITTED CLOTHING: airflow is restricted in your vaginal area. The loss of airflow may lead to more moisture & higher temperature which ultimately intensifies symptoms. AVOID nylon underwear. Wear white, cotton underwear to improve ventilation and wicking. Sleep without underwear if possible.
- ACTIVITIES that put pressure on your vulva, such as biking, horseback riding, & rowing. Avoid swimming in highly chlorinated pools.
- VAGINAL HEALTH PRODUCTS such as sprays, douche, body wash, and other cleansers. Avoid products which contain benzocaine.
- MATERIALS WITH PERFUMES AND/OR DYES: INSTEAD, use cotton tampons/ perfume free: soft, white, unscented toilet paper; unscented/ dye free laundry soaps/body wash/hand soaps.
- FABRIC SOFTENERS AND DRYER SHEETS: use only perfume free options.

### Suburban Gynecology

Phone: 815-717-8727 Fax: 815-717-8722

[www.mygyne.net](http://www.mygyne.net)

\*1890 Silver Cross Boulevard, Suite 375, New Lenox, IL 60451

\*16615 S. Route 59, Plainfield, IL 60586

\*15300 West Avenue, Orland Park, IL 60462