

GENITAL SKIN CARE

There are 3 key facts for genital skin care:

1. Avoid IRRITANTS;
2. KEEP DRY; and
3. Decrease FRICTION or RUBBING

Avoid Irritants

Your genital skin is very sensitive. Avoid cleansing the area more than once a day. You should try to avoid the following substances which are irritants and may make your discomfort worse:

- soaps;
- tea tree oil;
- tar based skin preparations;
- bubble bath and some bath salts;
- perfumed products;
- medicated creams;
- artificial lubricants;
- scented oils;
- some brands of toilet paper;
- some sanitary napkins;
- panty liners;
- some laundry detergents;
- dyes in underwear;
- deodorants;
- disinfectants;
- deodorized pads/tampons; and
- douches.

Other Irritants

Some products labeled 'mild' or 'hypo-allergenic' can still be irritating to your skin. Check with your doctor.

We suggest that:

- you avoid over the counter creams or products unless prescribed by your doctor;
- you try white unscented toilet paper;
- you try a laundry powder free of dyes, enzymes and perfumes and avoid fabric softener; and
- women who are allergic to adhesives on the back of sanitary pads should try a different brand or pads without adhesives.

Keep Dry

Excess moisture encourages infection. You should:

- take off swimming clothes and wet gym gear as soon as possible;
- wear cotton underwear when possible; and
- carry extra underwear with you to change into if you become damp.

Decrease Friction or Rubbing

Damaged skin from friction and rubbing is vulnerable to infection. Scratching damages the skin and may also lead to thickening of the skin (lichenification) which increases itching.

You should:

- avoid rubbing the genital skin with a washcloth;
- pat dry rather than rubbing with a towel (some people use a hairdryer on a cool setting);
- avoid shaving and waxing the genital area;
- avoid tight clothing; and
- try aqueous, sorbolene cream or

emulsifying ointment as a lubricant for sexual intercourse (unless you are using condoms or a diaphragm).

Some Helpful Advice

Cleansing the Genital Skin:

- use sorbolene cream or aqueous cream for cleansing;
- wash once a day;
- use cool water; and
- a salt water bath (1 level teaspoon salt per litre of cool water) can sooth irritated, itchy or inflamed skin.

Itchy Skin:

- avoid scratching as this increases itchiness (itch-scratch cycle);
- if you are scratching at night, cut your nails or wear cotton gloves to bed;
- use a covered ice pack to reduce itching;
- use distraction or relaxation techniques when you get the urge to scratch; and
- you may find anti-histamines helpful.

Painful Urination

If urine touches broken skin it might hurt. Try urinating into a wet face washer or in a bath tub of water. Adjust your body position (e.g. lean forward) when urinating so as to avoid urine dripping on inflamed skin. If it hurts for you to pass urine, see a doctor.

Sexual Health Service Tasmania is staffed Monday to Friday from 8.30 am until 5.00 pm. Clinic times vary from site to site so please contact your local office for details (see contact details on the back of this pamphlet).

**Sexual Health Service
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**SEXUAL HEALTH SERVICE
A joint Australian and State
Government Program**

The Royal Hobart Hospital is Tasmania's largest hospital and provides a number of state-wide services including cardiothoracic surgery, neurosurgery, burns management, hyperbaric and diving medicine, neonatal intensive care and high-risk obstetrics. It is the major teaching and research hospital for the State and works closely with the University of Tasmania.

Many students in the health care professions are taught within the Hospital, and gaining skills in examining and interviewing patients is an important part of their education and training. We ask for your co-operation and encourage you to participate in our teaching and research activities. Your permission is required for participation.

The Royal Hobart Hospital encourages feedback from patients, relatives and visitors. This feedback helps staff to better understand the needs of patients and provide the best possible patient care.



**The Royal Hobart Hospital
is a smoke-free site**

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**Information
Pamphlet**

Sexual
Health
SERVICE

**Guidelines for
Genital Skin Care**