

Vulval and vaginal health

Easy Read fact sheet

About this fact sheet



This fact sheet is from
Jean Hailes for Women's Health.



You can read more information about this topic
on the
[Jean Hailes Vulva and vagina web page.](#)



This fact sheet is written in a way that is easy
to understand.



We add a star before and after ***hard words***.
Then we explain what the words mean.



You can ask someone to help you read and
understand this fact sheet.

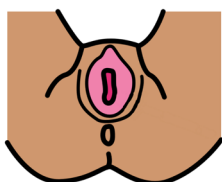


Contact information is at the end of this
fact sheet.

Vulval and vaginal health

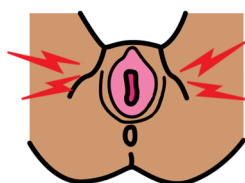


It is important to look after your female private parts.

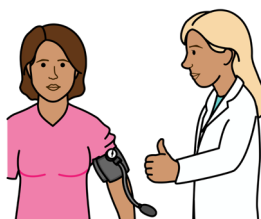


We will explain

- your female private parts

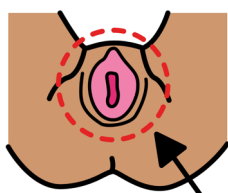


- problems that might affect your female private parts



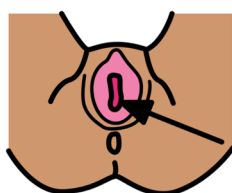
- what you can do to stay healthy.

What does ***vulva*** and ***vagina*** mean?



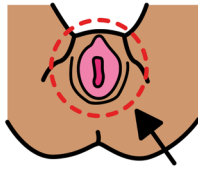
Your female private parts include your

- vulva

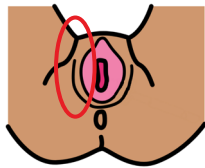


- vagina.

Your vulva and vagina are 2 different body parts.

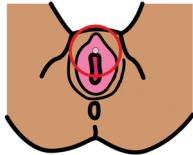


Your vulva is the outer area of your female private parts.

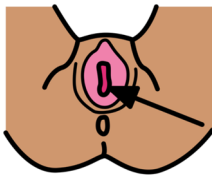


The main parts of your vulva are

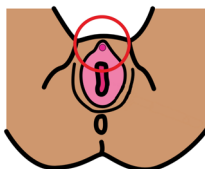
- the inner and outer lips



- the opening where your wee comes out



- the opening to your vagina

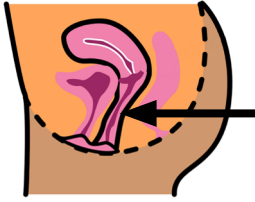


- the ***clitoris***.

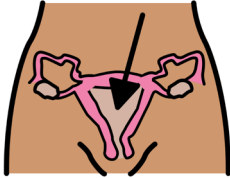
The clitoris is at the top of your vulva.



When the clitoris is touched it can feel good and this may help you enjoy sex more.



Your vagina is the tube inside your body that connects your vulva to your ***uterus***.

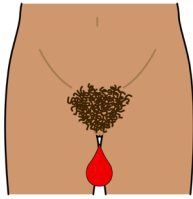


Your uterus is also called your womb. It is where babies can grow.



Your vagina is where

- you can have sex



- your period comes out



- babies come out.

Conditions that might affect your vulva and vagina

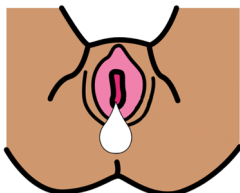
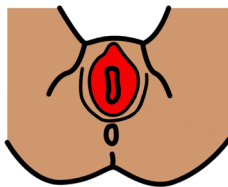
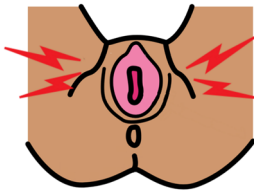
Vulval irritation



Vulval irritation means your vulva does **not** feel normal.

For example, your vulva might

- feel sore
- feel itchy
- look red.



Vaginal discharge

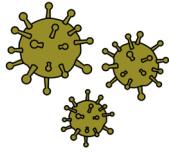
Vaginal discharge is fluid that comes out of your vagina.

The discharge can be clear or white.

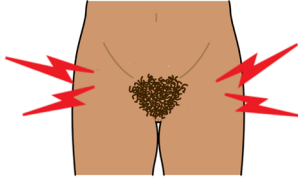


This kind of discharge is normal.

It helps keep your vagina clean.

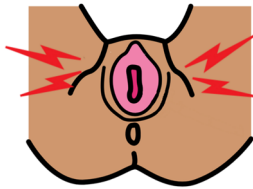


But sometimes discharge might mean you have a vaginal ***infection***.



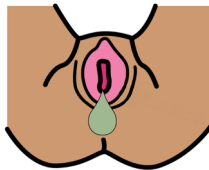
An infection is when germs cause health problems. For example, ***thrush***.

Thrush is a common vaginal infection.



A vaginal infection can cause

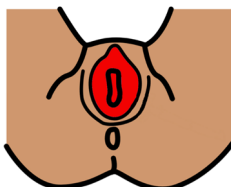
- a burning feeling or itching around your vulva



- vaginal discharge that is smelly or a different colour to normal

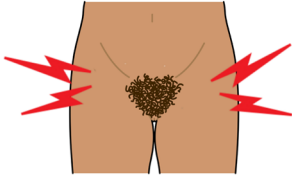


- stinging when you wee



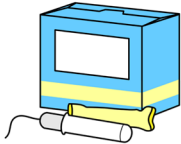
- a red and sore vulva and vagina.

Allergic reactions

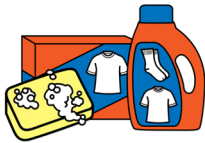


An allergic reaction is when some products make your vulva itchy and red.

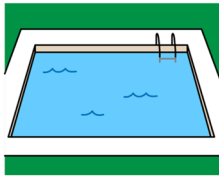
For example



- tampons

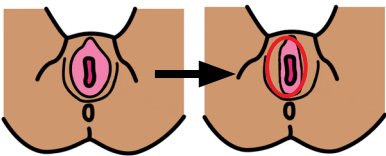


- soaps and washing powder



- chlorine from swimming pools.

Vaginal dryness



After ***menopause*** your vulval and vaginal skin gets thinner.

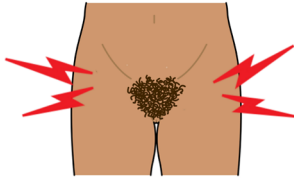


This can make your vagina feel dry and sex might be painful.



Menopause means your last period.

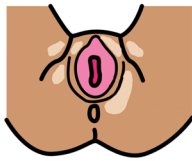
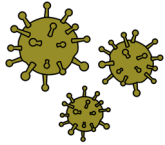
Vulval and vaginal pain



Vulval and vaginal pain can be caused by different things.

For example

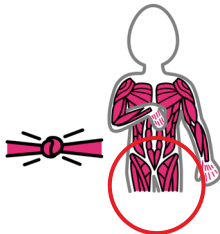
- infections



- skin problems



- surgery

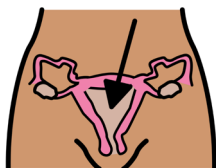
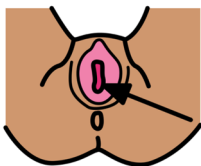


- tight ***pelvic floor muscles***.

Pelvic floor muscles support some parts of your body.

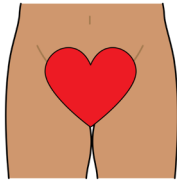
For example

- your vagina



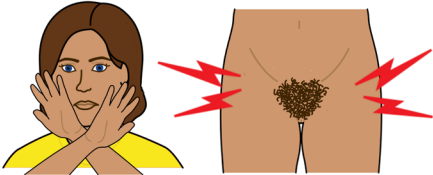
- your uterus.

What you can do to stay healthy

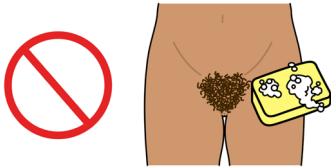


There are lots of things you can do to

- look after your vulva and vagina



- keep vulval irritation away.



For example

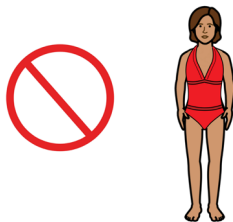
- do **not** wash your vulva with soap
 - use water or soap free wash



- do **not** use powder on your vulva



- do **not** stay in Lycra pants after exercising



- do **not** stay in bathers after swimming.

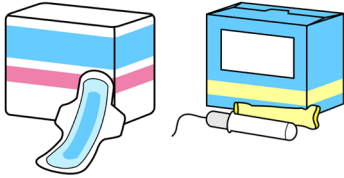
You can also



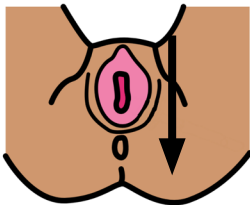
- use plain toilet paper that does **not** smell like perfume



- wear cotton or bamboo underwear
 - also wear cotton period underwear if you do not want to use pads or tampons



- use cotton pads and tampons when you have your period
 - change your pads and tampons often

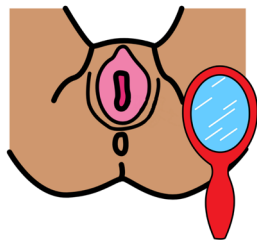


- wipe yourself from the top of your vulva to your bottom after going to the toilet
 - this stops germs going from your bottom to your vagina.



Wash your hands before and after you touch your vulva and vagina.

What is normal for you?



You can use a mirror to look at your vulva.



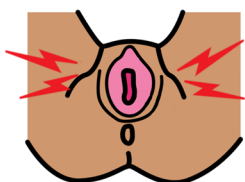
It is good to know what your vulva looks like when you feel healthy.



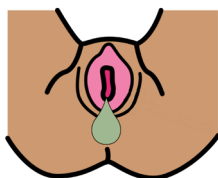
It is also good to know what your vaginal discharge looks like when you feel healthy.

When to see your doctor

It is important to see your doctor if you are worried about



- vulval irritation



- vaginal discharge



- vulval and vaginal pain.



Your doctor will ask what is happening.



It is ok to talk to your doctor about what is happening.



Many women have these health problems.



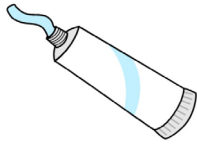
Your doctor might ask to check your vulva.
You can say **no** if you do **not** want this to happen.



Your doctor might ask for a sample for testing.
For example, a sample of your wee or a swab of your vagina.



The tests will help find what is causing the problem.

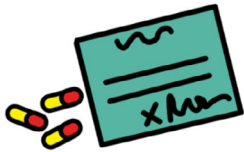


Your doctor might give you a ***script*** for

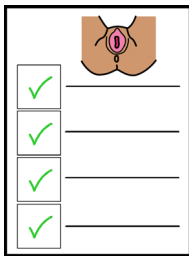
- ointments or creams



- tablets.



A script is a paper that allows you to buy some medicines from the chemist.



Your doctor might explain how you can care for your vulva and vagina.



If you need more tests your doctor might send you to a specialist.



 **Jean Hailes**
for Women's Health

More information

For more information contact
Jean Hailes for Women's Health.



Call 03 9453 8999



Website jeanhailes.org.au



Email education@jeanhailes.org.au

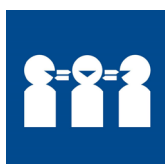


If you need help to hear or speak, contact the
National Relay Service.

Call 1300 555 727

Visit

communications.gov.au/accesshub/nrs



If you need help with other languages, contact
the Translating and Interpreting Service.

Visit tisonational.gov.au



© 2023 Jean Hailes Foundation. All rights reserved. This publication may not be reproduced in whole or in part by any means without written permission of the copyright owner. Contact: licensing@jeanhailes.org.au

This Easy Read document was created in December 2023 using Picture Communication Symbols (PCS). PCS and Boardmaker are trademarks of Tobii Dynavox LLC. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

For more information, please visit jeanhailes.org.au