Erythematous vulvar skin conditions can occur in early childhood and may present with itching or irritation of the vulva. Vulvar skin conditions are often first identified by the primary care provider, based on symptoms, clinical exam and occasionally lab assessment (culture). Consult pediatric dermatology and/or pediatric gynecology specialists if diagnosis is unclear.

**ASSESSMENT**

Perform a standard health history and physical exam (HPE) with specific questions about symptoms (vulvar redness, itching, burning, pain with urination or with bowel movements), contact irritants (soaps, lotions, laundry detergents, underwear, diapers, or panty liner/sanitary pads), and prior treatments. Assess for personal and family history of recent strep infection and inflammatory bowel disease.

**HPE (HISTORY AND PHYSICAL EXAM) RED FLAGS**

- Pre-pubertal patient
- Vulvar itch
- Vulvar erythema, yellow/green discharge (vulvovaginitis, strep infection)
- Pain with urination or defecation
- Diaper or pad distribution (contact dermatitis)
- Punched-out ulcer(s) or erosion(s) (e.g., Lipschutz or herpes)
- Edema and perianal tags/fissures/ulcers (vulvar Crohn’s)
- Crusted red-brown papules on scalp, neck, axilla, and diaper distribution

**MANAGEMENT/TREATMENT and WHEN TO REFER**

**Vulvovaginitis**

- Swab external vulvar skin with aerobic culture

**Contact Dermatitis**

- Consider irritations and remove exposure
- Apply protective barrier cream (e.g., Vaseline) as needed for comfort
- Topical steroid (hydrocortisone 2.5%) as needed
- Recommend sitz baths

**Candidal Diaper Rash**

- Swab for yeast
- Treat with topical azole x 3 weeks
- Perineal hygiene
- NOTE: Uncommon in children out of diapers or prepubertal

**Vulvar Crohn’s**

- Order fecal calprotectin or fecal lactoferrin
- Perineal hygiene
- NOTE: Patients with well-controlled GI Crohn’s can still present with vulvar Crohn’s

**RECOMMENDED PERINEAL HYGIENE AS FOLLOWS:**

- Avoid using any soap on vulva
- Apply protective barrier cream (e.g., Vaseline or 40% zinc oxide) as needed for comfort
- Use plain warm water bath to help with perineal hygiene; avoid bath bombs and bubble baths
- Voiding with legs spread apart
- Cotton-only underwear
- Avoid underwear at night when sleeping

**Vulvar Skin Conditions—Erythematous**

**FAST FACTS**

**ages 3–10 years**

- Candida vulvovaginitis is uncommon in these children who are out of diapers

**diaper dermatitis**

- Is most common in children 2–8 months

For clinical questions about these conditions, contact:

Dermatology: 513-636-4215; dermatology@cchmc.org

Gynecology: 513-636-9400; gynecology@cchmc.org

If you would like additional copies of this tool, or would like more information, please contact the Physician Outreach and Engagement team at Cincinnati Children’s.

Tool developed by Cincinnati Children’s physician-hospital organization (known as Tri-State Child Health Services, Inc.) and staff in the James M. Anderson Center for Health Systems Excellence. Developed using expert consensus and informed by Best Evidence Statements, Care Practice Guidelines, and other evidence-based documents as available. For Evidence-Based Care Guidelines and references, see www.cincinnatichildrens.org/evidence.
## Vulvar Skin Conditions—Erythematous

### Patient Presents

**History of Present Illness**
- Itch/irritation
- +/- Damp underwear
- +/- Burning with urination
- Yellow/white discharge
- Redness of vaginal introitus

**Family History**

**Physical Exam**
- History of eczema
- +/- History of eczema
- +/- History of eczema

### Standard Workup

- History of Present Illness
- Family History
- Physical Exam

### HPE (HISTORY AND PHYSICAL EXAM) RED FLAGS (when present, refer per chart below)

- Pre-pubertal patient
- Vulvar itch
- Vulvar erythema, yellow/green discharge (vulvovaginitis, strep infection)
- Pain with urination or defecation
- Diaper or pad distribution (contact dermatitis)
- Punched-out ulcer(s) or erosion(s)
- Edema and perianal tags/fissures/ulcers (vulvar Crohn’s)
- Crusted red-brown papules on scalp, neck, axilla, and diaper distribution

### Symptoms/History

- Itch/irritation
- +/- Damp underwear
- +/- Burning with urination
- Yellow/white discharge
- Redness of vaginal introitus

### Signs/Findings

- Spares folds
- Involves folds
- Beery erythema with satellite pustules or erosions with collarettes of scale
- Peau de orange/edema
- Fissures/ulcers
- Perianal tags

### Diagnosis

- Non-specific Vulvovaginitis
- Strep infection—get GU culture of labia
- Irritant contact from urine/feaces
- Allergic contact to wipes/diapers
- Candidal infection
- Vulvar Crohn’s

### Recommendations

- Perineal hygiene
- Sedating antihistamine at night if pruritus severe (1 mg/kg of hydroxyzine or Benadryl)
- Perineal hygiene: Amoxicillin or anti-strep antibiotic x 10–14 days
- Perineal hygiene
- Barrier ointments
- If severe, hydrocortisone 2.5% x 5 days
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- Barrier ointments
- If severe, hydrocortisone 2.5% x 5 days
- Perineal hygiene
- Swab for yeast
- Treat with topical azole antifungal x 3 weeks
- Barrier ointments
- If severe, hydrocortisone 2.5% x 5 days
- Change to water only or laxative grade mineral oil on cotton square/round for wiping
- Change to water only or laxative grade mineral oil on cotton square/round for wiping
- Perineal hygiene
- Order fecal calprotectin/lactoferrin

### Referral

- Refer to Cincinnati Children’s Gynecology if symptoms do not improve with initial treatment
- Refer to Cincinnati Children’s combined dermatology/gynecology clinic if symptoms do not improve with initial treatments
- Refer to Cincinnati Children’s combined dermatology/gynecology clinic if symptoms do not improve with initial treatments
- Refer to Cincinnati Children’s GI and encourage continued follow-up
- Refer to Cincinnati Children’s combined dermatology/gynecology clinic

### Recommend Perineal Hygiene

- Avoid using any soap on vulva
- Apply protective barrier cream (e.g., Vaseline or 40% zinc oxide) as needed for comfort
- Use plain warm water bath to help with perineal hygiene; avoid bath bombs and bubble baths
- Voiding with legs spread apart
- Cotton-only underwear; sleeping without underwear

For urgent issues, or to speak with the specialist on call 24/7, call the Physician Priority Link® at 1-888-987-7997.