

Urethritis from Soap - in Young Girls

Definition

- Urethritis is when the urethra becomes irritated or infected.
- The urethra is the tube that connects the bladder to the vulva. It carries the urine out of the bladder.
- The vulva (outer part of the vagina) is also often irritated. This is called vulvitis.
- This problem only occurs in young girls, long before puberty.
- This diagnosis is only made after medical exam by a doctor.

Health Information

Symptoms

- The main symptom of urethritis is burning or discomfort when passing urine.
- Girls may also have pain or itching of the vulva.
- If the urethritis spreads to infect the bladder, symptoms will get worse. Your child will have more pain when passing urine. The urine can become cloudy with a bad odor. She may urinate more frequently.
- If the vagina also becomes infected, a vaginal discharge will occur.

Cause

- Urethritis in young girls is from soap irritating the urethra opening. The usual irritants are bubble bath, shampoo, or soapy bath water.
- Sometimes it is due to irritation from stool. Wiping back to front may be the cause.
- Before puberty, the urethra and vulva are thin and sensitive.

Diagnosis

- Any child with painful urination needs a urine sample checked. This is to rule out a bladder infection.
- Soap urethritis is diagnosed by having symptoms of pain when passing urine plus a normal urine test.

Prevention

- Cleanse the genital area with warm water only. Soap is not needed before puberty. If needed, gently wipe away any dried secretions from between the labia (the outer lips of the vagina).
- Do not use bubble bath. It can be very irritating to the urethra, vulva and vagina. Avoid getting too much soap or shampoo in bath water.
- Shampoo your child's hair at the end of the bath.
- Keep the bath time less than 10 minutes. End the bath sooner if the water is soapy.
- Have your child try to urinate right after baths.
- Wear cotton underwear. Underwear made of synthetic fibers (polyester or nylon) don't allow the skin to "breathe." Discourage wearing underpants during the night. Reason: so the genital area has a chance to "air out."
- Teach your daughter to wipe herself correctly after passing stools. That means front to back.

What to Expect

- The discomfort goes away after 1 to 2 days of proper treatment.

Care Advice

1. **Key Points**

- Urethritis will get better with home treatment.
- Cleaning the genital area properly is key.
- Here is some care advice that should help.

2. **Cleanse the Genital Area with Warm Water and Baking Soda**

- Soak your child's bottom in a basin or bathtub of warm water for 10 minutes. Add 4 tablespoons of baking soda per tub of warm water.
- Be sure she spreads her legs to allow the water to clean the genital area.
- Repeat this twice a day for the next 2 days.
- This will remove any irritants from the genital area and promote healing.
- After the symptoms go away, cleanse the genital area once a day with warm water.
- Never clean the vulva or vagina with soap.

3. **Hydrocortisone Cream**

- Apply a tiny amount of 1% hydrocortisone cream to the vulva. No prescription is needed. Dry the area first.
- Do this twice a day for 2 days, then stop using it.

4. **Pain Relief**

- Give your child acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil) to reduce the painful urination. Repeat as needed. (see Dosage chart).

5. **Drink Enough Fluids**

- Encourage her to drink enough fluids to keep the urine light-colored.
- Reason: concentrated urine can be more painful when passed.

Call Your Doctor If

- Urine sample hasn't been checked for infection
- Pain and itching is not gone after 48 hours of treatment
- Passing urine becomes more painful
- You think your child needs to be seen
- You have other questions or concerns

Pediatric Care Advice

Author: Barton Schmitt MD, FAAP

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