



## **GENITAL CARE FOR WOMEN**

### **What is it?**

Genital care means the way in which women keep their genital area healthy. This part of the body (the vulva)\* is made up of skin, moist areas and glands.

Secretions (moistness) from the vagina keep it clean and healthy and these secretions are normal. These secretions protect the vagina and the skin.

### **Are there any problems with washing the genitals?**

Yes. The skin and moist surfaces of this part of the body are very delicate. It is important not to wash with harsh chemicals that may irritate the area. Washing too often, or rubbing too hard when drying, can irritate this skin. If you have problems in this area, washing with plain, lukewarm (not hot) water is best. Using soap, shower gels and some cleansers can make the problems worse. Your health care provider may be able to suggest a soap substitute.

### **What is the best way of keeping myself “clean”?**

Gently separate the outer "lips" and bathe the inner skin with plain water, using your hands only. Gently pat dry the outer skin. Do not use a hair dryer.

### **What about clothing?**

Wear well fitting clothing and avoid thongs, girdles, tight jeans and hose. Wash underclothes in a mild detergent and avoid fabric softeners.

### **What is best to use for my period?**

Disposable menstrual pads and tampons can be used. The best ones are natural cotton or hypoallergenic products. Remember to use ones that fit properly and change them regularly.

### **What else should I know?**

It is not necessary to wash the vulva every day and it should not be washed more than once a day. Do not wash the vagina. Do not use wipes, deodorants, douches or other cosmetic and cleansing products. Women with a problem in this area should use only treatments prescribed by their health care provider.

\*You can find more information about the vulva in the information leaflet 'The Normal Vulva' on this website.