

Vulvar Dystrophy or Dermatoses (Skin Changes around the Vagina)

What is vulvar dystrophy?

Vulvar dystrophy and dermatoses are changes in the skin of the vulva. The vulva are the folds of skin around the opening of the vagina (birth canal) and urethra (the tube that drains urine from the bladder).

There are different types of dystrophy that cause white or gray patches of skin, thickening and itchy skin patches, thin areas of skin, or painful sores. If not treated, some types of dystrophy can cause scarring and shrinkage of the inner folds of the vulva. The vaginal opening may get smaller and might even close. Treatment can help prevent these problems.

What is the cause?

The cause of vulvar dystrophy or dermatoses is often not known. Irritation of the skin may be a cause, or irritation may make the symptoms worse.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms may include:

- Itching, burning, or stinging of the vulva
- Pain with sex
- White or gray patch of thickened or thin skin on the vulva, sometimes with scaling, cracking, bleeding, or wrinkling
- Redness or sores

How is it diagnosed?

Your healthcare provider will ask about your symptoms and medical history and examine you. Tests may include:

- Pelvic exam
- Biopsy, which is the removal of a small sample of tissue for testing

How is it treated?

The treatment depends on the type of dystrophy you have. Usually, your healthcare provider will prescribe a steroid cream that you put on your vulvar area. Use steroid medicine exactly as your healthcare provider prescribes. Don't use more or less of it than prescribed by your provider and don't use it longer than prescribed. Don't stop using a steroid without your provider's approval.

How can I take care of myself?

Follow the full course of treatment prescribed by your healthcare provider. Keep using the medicine for as long as your provider tells you to.

Other things you can do to help relieve symptoms are:

- Avoid things that may irritate your vulva. For example, don't use strong or perfumed soaps, lotions, or deodorants in your genital area. Bathe with a gentle, unscented soap. Rinse your genital area thoroughly but gently. Pat dry without rubbing.
- If you have sores in the genital area, your symptoms may be soothed by soaking in a bath with aluminum acetate solution (Burrow's solution) added to the water. Or soak a cloth in Burrow's solution and put the moist cloth on the sore area.
- Wear loose-fitting, all-cotton or cotton-crotch underwear.
- Keep your genital area dry.
- Don't use feminine hygiene products, such as sprays or powders. Avoid bubble baths and oils. Don't douche unless told to do so by your healthcare provider.
- Don't use perfumed laundry detergent or fabric softener.
- Don't use tampons.
- Use unscented white toilet paper.
- Avoid using spermicides.

Ask your healthcare provider:

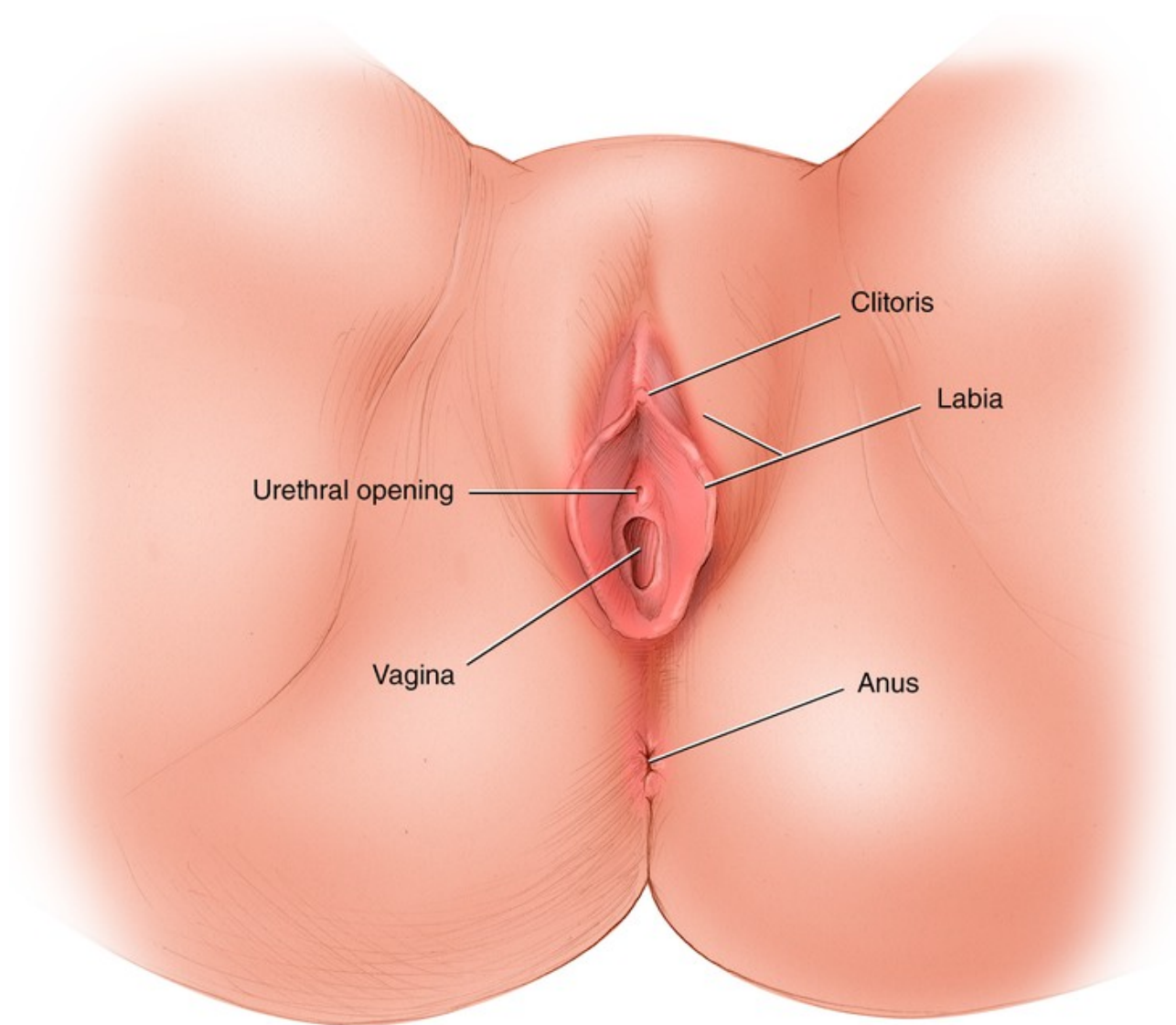
- How and when you will hear your test results
- How long it will take to recover
- What activities you should avoid and when you can return to your normal activities
- How to take care of yourself at home
- What symptoms or problems you should watch for and what to do if you have them

Make sure you know when you should come back for a checkup.

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Vulva



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