

Male Genital Washing Advice

Information for patients



Tip 1: Avoid soap

Soap was first invented more than 2000 years ago. Soap makes us clean by removing the oils we produce to lubricate the skin from our bodies, as well as the skin bacteria that is contained in the oils.

Soap is no longer the best option to clean with. Soap can cause the skin to dry out too much resulting in cracking of the top layers of your skin, called superficial layers.

Micro-organisms that live on the skin can get into these cracks and this can result in itching and soreness. This particularly affects the genital skin.

Using any soap product above the waist can mean that the product will wash onto the genital skin when you rinse in the bath or shower.

Washing with just water can also dry out the genital skin. It would be best to use a soap substitute over the entire body instead.

Tip 2: Use a soap substitute

A more modern way to wash is to use a soap substitute. Soap substitutes remove the bacteria that make us smell but add moisture to the skin, instead of taking it away. If your skin is well moisturised, this will help to stop it from getting itchy and sore.

Soap substitutes are widely available in all pharmacies. Depending on the brand required you can get them off the shelf or from the pharmacy team. Some examples are (other products may be available):

- | | | |
|-----------------|---------------------|-----------|
| • Aqueous Cream | • Diprobase | • Oilatum |
| • Cetaphil | • Epaderm | • ZeroAQS |
| • Dermol 500 | • Hydromol Ointment | |

Tip 3: Pull back the foreskin when washing

Always remember to pull back the foreskin gently but fully when washing. Dry gently with a towel before replacing the foreskin.

Tip 4: If the head of the penis becomes red, sore, or itchy after sex or at any other time

Stop using your normal washing product. Dissolve some kitchen salt in warm water and use this mixture to clean the head of the penis and under the foreskin twice a day for 48 hours. You should also get some Clotrimazole or Canestan cream from a pharmacy and apply this after washing for 7 days. If the symptoms do not improve after 7 days, please contact Chalmers Sexual Health by phone for advice.

Tip 5: If the skin of the foreskin becomes tight or tears when pulling back or during sex

Follow the above advice and wait for the skin to heal before having sex again. Then use a lubricant which does not have fragrance or added chemicals.

Tip 6: Avoid bubble baths, essential oils or soap/shower gels in the bath

They will get onto the genital skin and may cause irritation. You can buy non-soap bath additives instead.

Tip 7: Avoid wet wipes

Do not use wet wipes on the genital skin- they are designed for babies who have much 'tougher' genital skin than adults.

Do not spray deodorant or any other product onto the genital skin.

Tip 8: When washing hair

It is important not to let shampoo or conditioner run onto the genital skin. This means you should not wash your hair in the bath and when in the shower, keep your head forward when rinsing products from your scalp

Tip 9: Avoid fabric softeners

Do not use a fabric softener or a 2 in 1 washing product when washing your clothes.

The perfume in these products gets onto the genital skin and causes drying and damage to the skin.

Tip 10: Do you have athletes foot?

This is a fungal infection and you can spread it from your feet to your genital area when you pull on underwear. It can cause a red itchy rash affecting the groin and the penis. If you have cracks between your toes (even if your feet are not itchy), you should buy some Terbinafine cream from a pharmacy and use to clear the infection on your feet. This can stop it spreading to your genital area. Clotrimazole cream, which can also be bought from a pharmacy, can be used on the genital skin.

Need more information?

If you need to contact the Chalmers Centre, our details are:

Chalmers Centre for Sexual Health
2a Chalmers Street
Edinburgh
EH3 9ES

Tel: **0131 536 1070**

