

# VULVODYNIA (VULVAL PAINS)

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Vulvodynia refers to chronic pains in the outer area of the vulva. The origins of the pains are unexplainable. The pain is generally around the opening of the vagina but can also be more widespread. The pain can be constant or only appear when touched, during intercourse, or using tampons. The pain might have appeared already from the first time inserting a tampon or having sex or it might have appeared after several years without any problems. We do not know how many women suffer of vulvodynia, as the suffering is often overseen or mistaken. It does however seem to mainly affect younger women.

## SYMPTOMS

Sexual intercourse is impossible or at least painful. The pains can continue after intercourse for half an hour up to several hours or even days. With time, it can lead to lower pain threshold, increased sensitivity, and spontaneous pains. From then onwards follows a vicious cycle of chronic pain and self-reinforcing mechanisms such as sex-related anxiety, and some patients suffer of incommensurate muscle tensions, especially in the perineal - thereby causing different sorts of pains. Women with vulvodynia do not have pains on the basis of psychological difficulties, but vulvodynia itself can lead to challenging psychologic aftermaths. Women with vulvodynia are more likely to also suffer from anxiety, catastrophic thinking, and chronic stress. Vulvodynia can also cause problems in other organs' mucous membranes, especially in the bladder and bowel.

## WHO CAN I CALL WITH QUESTIONS?

You are welcome to call the Women's Clinic every weekday from 8.00 - 15.00 on 36 46 71 40.

Revised April 2020. To be revised on an ongoing basis and certainly no later than 1 April 2022, before in case of any significant changes.

## DIAGNOSIS

The diagnosis for vulvodynia is done by eliminating other possible conditions. The doctor will therefore ask about your medical and surgical history and carefully examine your outer genitals to assess the skin and mucous membranes. You will only be gynecologically examined with instruments if it is necessary and you agree to it.

## TREATMENT

The management and treatment of vulvodynia can be challenging and take up to several months. The best treatment is very personal and might be a process of trial and error. Here are some possible treatments your doctor can offer you:

- Topical treatments: local nerve-stabilising cream
- Self-massaging the sore areas with almond oil or silicone based lubricant
- Physical treatment with a physiotherapist specialised in lower abdominal pains
- Taking a break from the contraceptive ('combined') pill
- Reference to Vulvaklinikken (clinical department specialised in the vulva) in f. ex. Herlev Sygehus

There isn't a specific cause that can be pinpointed as the reason why women get vulvodynia. Given that there seem to be many different possible origins to these chronic pains, a single form of treatment can therefore not be expected to function for all patients.