

# Plasma Cell Vulvitis

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## What is Plasma Cell Vulvitis?

Plasma cell vulvitis (PCV) is a rare chronic inflammatory skin condition that can affect the skin of the vulva. What causes it? The cause of PCV is unknown. It is a benign (non-cancerous) condition and is not due to an infection and cannot be transmitted to other people.

## What are the symptoms?

Women with PCV describe symptoms of burning, itch and or soreness on the inside of the small lips of the vulva. These symptoms can interfere with daily living activities such as wearing clothing, sitting, and or walking. Women may describe stinging or burning when they urinate. PCV can also make any sexual activity uncomfortable. If the vaginal skin is involved a woman may note some abnormal vaginal discharge and or bleeding.

## How is it diagnosed?

The diagnosis is often clinical. This skin condition causes distinct changes in the appearance of the affected skin. PCV is characterized by often multiple well defined patches of glazed red or red-orange skin often on the inside of the small lips of the vulva or at the entrance to the vagina. The area that is affected may also be swollen and painful to touch. A skin biopsy may need to be performed to confirm the clinical diagnosis and rule out other skin conditions like Lichen Planus, Contact Dermatitis, Vulvar Intra-Epithelial Neoplasia. The skin biopsy will usually find numerous plasma cells (a type of white blood cell) in the skin.

## What is the treatment?

- The treatment recommended depends on the severity of a woman's symptoms. If symptoms are mild, then some women will only need to follow a good skin care routine and use a daily moisturizer and/or barrier cream on the skin.
- If the symptoms are moderate, then a topical anti-inflammatory is recommended. Topical steroids are often used on a regular basis (2-3 times per week) to reduce the swelling, redness and discomfort. Other anti-inflammatories include topical calcineurin inhibitors such as tacrolimus ointment.
- Surgical excision is also an option.

## What is the Follow Up?

PCV may persist for years and therefore regular follow up (once per year) with a health care provider is often helpful to monitor for further skin changes and make adjustments to treatments.