

## Further advice

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For more information on contraception and sexual health services in Greenwich, please see [greenwichsexualhealth.org](http://greenwichsexualhealth.org)

For more information about Oxleas and the most up-to-date CASH service timetable, please see [oxleas.nhs.uk/cash](http://oxleas.nhs.uk/cash)

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## What not to wash How to look after your genital area

Adult community health services

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# This leaflet is for women who are suffering from vaginal discomfort.

It explains how to keep the vagina clean without over-washing it. It is produced by the Contraception and Sexual Health (CASH) Service.

Many women experience problems with discharge, unpleasant odours, itching and soreness, which are caused or made worse by excessive genital hygiene.

It is difficult to believe that you can wash too much, but evidence from many research studies suggests that women who suffer from smelly vaginal discharge, itching and soreness often use soaps or antiseptics (such as scented soaps, bubble baths, Dettol or Savlon) to wash the genital area. Many women also wash, rinse or wipe the vagina.

## Tips

- Limit soaps, oils and bubble baths. Use plain water or aqueous cream instead. Aqueous cream can be bought relatively cheaply over the counter from the chemist.
- Never use antiseptics (such as Dettol or Savlon) in the bath water and/or to wash the genital area.
- Avoid feminine hygiene products eg wipes.
- Use warm water and wash with your hand. Scrubbing or wiping with a flannel, wash cloth or cotton wool is not recommended.

- Never wash inside the vagina (even with just water) - it cleans itself. If you do wash, wipe or rinse the vagina you destroy its natural environment and upset the balance of healthy bacteria and yeast.
- Wash your hair when showering or over the sink rather than in the bath to avoid getting shampoo in the vagina.
- After washing, dry the skin by patting gently with your own clean towel.
- Cotton underwear allows the skin to breathe. Avoid underwear that rubs against the skin.
- Shaving often causes unsightly sore red spots that can be difficult to get rid of. If you feel hair removal is essential, trim the hairs carefully with a pair of scissors using a mirror.

**Remember: You can keep yourself perfectly clean by just washing on the outside with warm water once a day.**