**What is vulvodynia?**

Vulvodynia refers to vulvar discomfort or pain of at least 3 months’ duration, without a clear identifiable cause for the pain. Approximately 16% of women experience this type of vulvar discomfort and or vulvar pain at some time in their life. Vulvodynia may be either generalized to the entire vulva (termed generalized vulvodynia) or localized to specific areas of the vulva (e.g., the clitoris – termed clitorodynia; the vulvar vestibule – termed vestibulodynia). Further, the pain or discomfort may be either provoked (i.e., occurring only when the area is touched such as during sexual activities or gynaecological examinations) or unprovoked.

**What are the symptoms?**

Women experience uncomfortable sensations such as burning, stinging, irritation, stabbing, or rawness. The discomfort may be mild or severe. Some women find the symptoms very distracting and report that the symptoms interfere with daily living activities (wearing clothes, sitting, or walking) and/or sexual activities.

**How is vulvodynia diagnosed?**

The diagnosis of vulvodynia is based primarily upon a women’s history and a thorough clinical exam of the vulva and vagina. No special investigations and or tests are usually needed.

**How do you treat vulvodynia?**

There are many different therapies and treatments available for women suffering from vulvodynia including medical, behavioral, and surgical treatments. Women will often need to try several different treatments before experiencing significant pain relief. The longer a woman has been experiencing pain, the more likely that she will benefit from a multidisciplinary approach to treating her pain.

This handout is from the BC Centre for Vulvar Health. The self-help guide below has details on all available treatment options.

*National Vulvodynia Association* has a Self Help Guide which you can access [here](https://bcvulvarhealth.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/NVA.Self-help.guide_.pdf).

<https://bcvulvarhealth.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/NVA.Self-help.guide_.pdf>

Other resources can be found [here](https://bcvulvarhealth.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Vulvodynia-Resources.pdf).

<https://bcvulvarhealth.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Vulvodynia-Resources.pdf>

*Watch our online Education Forum for an overview of the treatment approaches introduced in the Vulvar Pain Assessment Clinic.*

<https://nexuswebcast.mediasite.com/Mediasite/Play/e5caabc12ec14bc39695b67711aac02a1d>