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The Vulva

A Practical Handbook for Clinicians

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Glossary

Acanthosis nigricans – a velvety eruption, sometimes with wart-like growths, accompanied by hyperpigmentation in the skin of the armpits, neck, anogenital area and groin

Alopecia areata – an autoimmune condition that causes hair loss with round bald patches that can evolve to complete baldness

Amoebiasis – a tropical infection with *Entamoeba histolytica*, most commonly causing gastroenteritis

Angiokeratoma – harmless raised, purple lesions composed of blood vessels with a hyperkeratotic surface, often found on the labia majora

Apareunia – inability to perform coitus because of a physical or psychological sexual dysfunction

Aphthae – small, shallow, painful ulcers that usually affect the oral mucosa but less commonly affect the vulva

Atopy – a common genetic condition characterised by asthma, hay fever and dermatitis, as well as, in some patients, exaggerated IgE responses

Autoimmune thyroiditis – an inflammatory disease of the thyroid associated with high levels of thyroid autoantibodies

Bleb – a blister filled with fluid (*see also* vesicle)

Campbell de Morgan spots – red papules on the skin containing a proliferation of blood vessels, very commonly found in middle-aged people

Candidiasis – fungal infection caused by *Candida* species, most often *C. albicans*

Cellulitis – a bacterial skin infection characterised by spreading painful

erythema, most often due to group A *Streptococcus*

Chancroid – a sexually transmissible tropical infection caused by *Haemophilus ducreyi* and characterised by genital ulcers

Comedones – also known as blackheads: papules with a dark centre caused by a build-up of sebaceous material in hair follicles

Crohn's disease – an inflammatory disease that may affect any part of the gastrointestinal tract from mouth to anus, which causes a wide variety of symptoms

Cytokines – immunoregulatory chemicals

Dermoscopy – a technique for examining skin lesions using a hand-held magnifying device

Desquamation – shedding of the outer layers of the skin

Desquamative inflammatory vulvovaginitis – an uncommon chronic non-infective vulvovaginitis characterised by an introital and vaginal rash, soreness, dyspareunia and discharge

Dowling–Degos disease – a rare disease that causes reticulated hyperpigmentation of the vulval and axillary skin

Dyspareunia – painful sexual intercourse

Erythema – redness of the skin

Folliculitis – inflammation or infection of one or more hair follicles, characterised by a pustular eruption

Fomite – any inanimate object or substance capable of carrying organisms

Fourchette – a small fold of membrane connecting the labia minora in the posterior part of the vulva

Glossary

Fox–Fordyce disease – a rare skin disorder characterised by the development of itchy bumps around the hair follicles of the underarm area, pubic region and/or around the nipples

Hamartoma – a neoplasm resulting from overgrowth of normal tissue

Hidradenitis suppurativa – a severe, chronic recurrent condition of the apocrine sweat glands, characterised by nodules, pustules and sinuses

Hyperalgesia – pain or discomfort from light touch, causing intolerance of tight clothes

Inguinal – pertaining to the groin

Intertriginous – where two skin areas touch or rub together

Koebner phenomenon – refers to skin lesions appearing in areas of chronic trauma

Leishmaniasis – a skin disease characterised by ulcers and nodules, caused by protozoan parasites of the genus *Leishmania* transmitted by sandfly bite

Lichenification – thickening of the surface of the skin, caused by scratching

Lymphogranuloma venereum – a sexually transmissible disease caused by *Chlamydia trachomatis*, causing genital abscesses and ulcers

Maceration – softening and whitening of skin due to chronic wetness

Macule – a change in skin colour without elevation or depression

Marsupialisation – cutting off the top of a cyst and suturing the cyst edges of the skin

Molluscum contagiosum – a viral skin disease characterised by small umbilicated papules

Morphoea – a condition in which there are areas of skin fibrosis similar to a scar

Mucosal petechiae – red–purple lesions of the skin or mucosa due to extravasation of blood from capillaries

Naevi – birthmarks or coloured skin markings

Neurofibromatosis – a genetic disease in which patients develop multiple soft tumours (neurofibromas) under the skin and throughout the nervous system associated with pigmented skin lesions

Non-sexual acute genital ulceration (NSAGU) – aphthous ulceration of the vulva (*see also* aphthae)

Papilloma – a benign pedunculated tumour

Papillomatous – similar to a wart, raised and rough

Papules – firm raised lesions on the skin

Pedunculated – growing or attaching to a peduncle or stalk

Pernicious anaemia – anaemia due to vitamin B12 deficiency

Pruritus – itch

Punctum – the opening of a sebaceous cyst

Rugose – wrinkled or ridged

Sebaceous adenitis – recurrent inflammation of the sebaceous glands of the labia minora

Sebaceous hyperplasia – a common harmless enlargement of the skin oil glands, which features skin-coloured to yellow-white elevations of the skin

Seborrhoeic keratoses – harmless skin lesions occurring in adulthood, also known as ‘age warts’

Spongiosis – a histopathological term meaning intercellular oedema between keratinocytes, or cells found in the epidermis

Stenosed – narrowed

Striae – stretchmarks

Glossary

- Syringomas** – harmless sweat duct tumours

Telangiectasia – small, superficial, dilated blood vessels

Tuberous sclerosis – rare, multisystem genetic disease characterised by skin lesions and internal tumours
- Umbilicated** – marked by depressed spots resembling the umbilicus

Vesicle – a fluid-filled sac within the epidermis

Violaceous – of a violet colour

Vitiligo – an autoimmune disease characterised by loss of skin pigment

Vulvovaginitis – inflammation of the vagina and vulva