

A Checklist In Preparation For Your Vulval Pain Hospital Consultation

Background

Vulvodynia is a chronic disease just like diabetes, asthma, hypertension and so on. Given that there are several factors that may lead to developing vulvodynia it is obvious then that there is a need for adopting several different strategies to improve your quality of life, function and achieving realistic goals. These will be available from a multi-disciplinary team approach to your condition.

You may have seen your GP, hospital consultants, physiotherapists, sexual and mental health professionals, and others in your journey. This checklist is to help you prepare for your next consultation. A very comprehensive questionnaire (the *Pelvic Pain Assessment Form*) is available from the *International Pelvic Pain Society* website. This checklist is one that I found useful in the limited time available in a consultation. Feel free to supplement it with any other information you think may help this consultation.

1. The reason for the referral

2. Details of your **vulval pain experience**: when did it start, what triggered it, what makes it worse or better, is it continuous or intermittent, is it related to your periods, bowel, or bladder function? How does it impact on your mood, sexual health, sleep, work, relationships with your partner, family, children, and others? What does it stop you from doing? What are your coping strategies when you have a flare-up?
3. **Treatments** you have tried and their efficacy. List your current medication plus the dose and frequency. Include all medications that are prescribed, those that you buy over the counter or over the internet, plus hormone replacement therapy

(HRT), contraception, tobacco, alcohol, cannabis or other recreational drugs and a history of allergies to drugs or food.

4. Any **other areas of pain** in your body? These include irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), bladder pain, constipation, headaches, temporomandibular dysfunction (TMD), multiple joint pains, fibromyalgia, reflux etc.
5. List (if applicable in chronological order) your **past medical, gynaecological, obstetric, surgical, mental health** etc events.
6. Is there a **family history** of any medical problems? What was your **childhood** (leading onto adulthood) like?
7. List all the **other doctors and health care professionals** you have seen and add comments if relevant.
8. Are you awaiting results or due to have any **investigations** or awaiting a **specialist referral** in the future? And for what reason?
9. What are your **expectations** from this consultation?
10. What are your **short, medium, and long-term goals?** And how does the vulvodynia impact on you achieving these goals?
11. Do you have **3 specific questions** you would like to be answered at the end of the consultation?

Go to the consultation with an open mind and listen to what is being offered and state your opinion on each option, bearing in mind that a few strategies might have to be adopted to help you succeed in coping with vulvodynia, thus improving your quality of life and function.

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Last updated Dr Winston de Mello 21st January 2021



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