What is a sore vulva?
Some young girls have a sore vulva from time to time. This is the area between the legs near the vagina. In most cases girls are 3 to 8 years old. The pain may be there one day and gone the next. There doesn’t seem to be a cause. At times it can be bad and cause crying. The vulva may look red. Also there can be a vaginal discharge. Most girls are better within a few months.

What is a vaginal discharge?
Most young girls have some white or yellow discharge now and then. It comes from the vagina. It can mark the pants. Sometimes there is a lot, or it is very smelly. The vulva can also be sore. Most girls are better within a few months.

What is the cause?
Often there isn’t a single cause. A few things may be acting together. It can happen with day or night time wetting. Or if children do not wipe their bottom well or there is constipation. Sweaty clothes, soap, bubble bath or swimming pool water can cause it. Eczema, worms, thrush or a mild bacterial skin infection may be present. All these things are common. In most children they do not cause any serious harm. Sometimes there is a urine infection. Tests may then be needed. Parents may worry about other things. Like a piece of paper pushed into the vagina. Or someone interfering with their child (child abuse). These causes are very rare.

What is thrush?
Thrush is a mild skin infection. It is caused by a fungus called candida. The skin may be itchy and sore. It may look red with white or yellow patches. We all have some candida on our skin and in our gut. Skin infection is more likely if the area is always damp or sore, and after antibiotics. Also it can occur with other illness such as anaemia or diabetes.

What are worms?
This is an infection of the gut by pinworms. They are light-coloured and about 1 cm long. They are very common in school children. Often you do not know you have them and they do no harm. You may see the worms near the bottom or in the poo. They can cause an itchy bottom. This is worse at night. Scratching can cause eczema or a skin infection. Girls with worms can have a sore vulva or vaginal discharge. In most cases the worms do no harm. They go away after a few months or years.

What can be done?
Your doctor may take a swab. This is when the skin is touched with cotton wool on a stick. It can help find out if it is due to bacteria or thrush. Your doctor can give you medicine for bacterial skin infection. Or cream or ointment for eczema or thrush. Tests and treatment may be needed if there is a urine infection. A medicine can be taken for worms. Day or night time wetting and constipation must be made better. Every day wash the area, dab dry with a towel and change the underwear. After swimming dab dry with a towel. Then put on dry clothes. Make sure you child is wiping her bottom from the front to the back. Use lightly fitting clothes and cotton pants. Rinse clothes well after washing. It may help to change the detergent and not use fabric softener. Do not
use scented soaps, bubble bath or disinfectant in the bath. Do not use clothes that make your child hot and sweaty such as nylon or polyester pants. It may help if you put on a simple cream like Diprobase or Epaderm twice a day. Your doctor may give you an oestrogen cream for a few weeks. If you think anyone is interfering with your child, see a doctor as soon as you can.

You can get further information from:
King’s Mill Hospital
Patient Advice and Liaison Services (PALS) on 01623 672222

Newark Hospital
Patient Advice and Liaison Services (PALS) on 01623 685692