Introduction
A new cleanser for female intimate hygiene based on natural extracts with antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory and freshening properties for women of child-bearing potential has been realised. Aim of the study was to compare the effects of use of this new intimate cleanser (SF) in daily protection compared with the usual cleanser used by the women.

Methods.
The cross-over study involved women of child-bearing potential treated for successive periods with their usual intimate cleanser (C) and with SF (Saugella Fresh, Rottapharm|Madaus), each being used twice daily for 2 weeks. SF formulation at pH 4.5 contains Thymus vulgaris with antimicrobial activity, Calendula officinalis with a soothing action, a slow-release menthol derivative (menthyl ethylamido oxalate) with a freshening, non-abrasive action and Xanthan gum, a mucoadhesive agent which prolongs the adhesion of the product in situ.

The presence of vulvovaginal symptoms was checked at time 0 and 2 weeks.

Results.
79 women (mean age 34.4 years) 31 of whom Caucasian, were treated.
Symptoms severity fell significantly in favour of SF over the course of the 2 week-treatment for pruritus (-80.9% with SF and -35.0% with C, p<0.01 between treatments), burning (-82.4% SF and -30.4% C, p<0.01), oedema (-85.3% SF and -49.1% C, p<0.01), erythema (-68.9% SF and -36.6% C, p<0.01), dryness (65.0% SF and -48.0% C, p<0.05), dyspareunia (-73.6% SF and -41.5% C, p<0.01). A feeling of freshness was perceived by 74.7% of cases with SF vs. 40.3% with C (p<0.05), the fragrance was felt to be pleasant in 87.3% of cases with SF vs. 43.2% with C (p<0.01), and preference was given to SF in 77.2% of cases (p<0.01).

Conclusions
The action of Calendula and Thymus extracts, favoured by mucoadhesive properties of Xanthan gum, protected the female genital area from irritation and infection better than traditional cleansers.