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Vaginal Dryness

Vaginal Dryness, also known as Vaginal atrophy or Atrophic Vaginitis, is a common and distressing condition which afflicts many women in the course of their lives, causing embarrassment, a sense of loss and at times, extreme physical discomfort.

A comfortable, naturally moist vagina which responds to sexual arousal with a surge of vaginal lubrication, can feel like a woman’s birthright. The loss of this, temporary or otherwise, can come as a shock, and be capable of undermining a woman’s sense of her innate womanliness and desirability.

What Causes Vaginal Dryness?

Vaginal tissue is kept moist, elastic and comfortable by lubrication which is naturally created by glands at the neck of the womb, and governed by the body’s production of estrogen. When the ovaries’ production of estrogen is disrupted, which can happen for a number of reasons, the vagina can feel itchy, dry and irritated. The resulting discomfort can be debilitating, and impact the comfort and pleasure of sex.

The commonest cause of a decrease in estrogen levels is the menopause. The ovaries make less estrogen during this transition which leads to a thinning of the vaginal tissues and a reduction in the number of lubricating glands. In time, the vagina can become drier, shorter and less supple. For some women, these changes may occur without causing particular discomfort, while for others, distressing symptoms may develop.

For women who are experiencing vaginal dryness but are certainly not perimenopausal, there are many other possible causes. These include life events, such as childbirth and its aftermath, hormone treatments, such as HRT and contraceptives, illness such as cancer and its treatments, medications such as anti depressants and hay-fever remedies, reaction to substances such as nicotine and alcohol, intolerance to preparations used in the vulvar area such as douches and harsh soaps and deep emotional upsets which can affect hormone production.
What can change estrogen levels?

- Pregnancy
- Childbirth
- Breastfeeding
- Post episiotomy
- Heavy cigarette smoking
- Oral contraceptives
- Post menstruation
- Hysterectomy
- Radiation and chemotherapy
- HRT
- Coming off HRT
- Ovulation
- Anti-depressants
- Candida albicans
- Emotional disturbance
- Alcohol
- Stress
- Immune disorders
- Allergy and cold medications
- Douching

Symptoms that can occur:

- Dryness, burning, stinging, swelling, chaffing and bleeding
- Discomfort if the vulva is inflamed and sore.
- Pain when you have sex (Dispareunia)
- Infection and discharge may be experienced. The normal vaginal mucus, acidity and tissue elasticity protect against vaginal and urinary tract infections. When these are reduced, so are the natural defenses, and infection meets less resistance. If you feel you have an infection, like Bacterial vaginosis, please see your doctor.

- Itching provokes scratching, which aggravates the itching, which leads to more furious scratching – or to the intolerable effort of not scratching. The sensitive skin around the vulva when weakened is prone to inflammation and itching.

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Remedies/ Treatments for Vaginal Dryness

If enough lubrication is not being naturally produced by a woman’s own body, she can ease the dryness and relieve the discomfort with the use of a commercially available water-based intimate lubricant or vaginal moisturizer. Certified organic Yes® water-based offers superior moisturizing power and purity, is soothing, kind and rapidly effective.

Some complementary therapies such as acupuncture may help. Wild Yam extract, Black cohosh and soy isoflavones are also promoted as aids in vaginal dryness.

The avoidance of douches, bubble baths and lotions is recommended. Do consult your doctor if you experience painful or persistent symptoms.

Terminology

Atrophic vaginitis – inflammation of vaginal/vulva leading to discharge
Cervix – the neck of the uterus, at the top of the vagina
Dyspareunia – painful sex
Dysuria – pain when urinating
HRT – Hormone Replacement Therapy
Incontinence – involuntary leakage of urine
Local HRT – Hormone treatment applied directly to the vagina
Menopause – the last menstrual period
Nocturia – needing to pass urine at night leading to weakening
Oestrogen – the main female hormone, produced mainly by the ovaries
Pelvic floor – muscles supporting the uterus and bladder
Postmenopause – the time in a woman's life after the menopause
Thrush (candida albicans) – a fungal overgrowth especially in the vagina

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Mr Nick Panay BSc MBBS MRCOG MFSRH
Director of the West London Menopause and PMS Centre

“In my capacity as a Consultant Gynaecologist with a special interest in premature menopause, I see many women suffering from menopausal vaginal atrophy, whose symptoms can be significantly eased through the use of an appropriate vaginal moisturiser/lubricant. Based on my professional experience of such products, and the feedback from my patients I can say without hesitation that the Yes range proves to be one of the most successful in combating the discomfort of dryness. I have confidence that its natural formulation affords effective re-moisturisation, while treating sensitive tissues with great gentleness.”

Anne Brember - Senior Breast Care Nurse
Basingstoke and North Hants Hospital

“I find that Yes organic products, are welcomed by my patients as a solution to the distressing symptoms of vaginal and vulval dryness and soreness which often result from their cancer treatment. These women find that the pure and natural lubricants and moisturisers which are gentle on traumatised tissues can provide much needed relief and make them feel more comfortable and feminine again.”

Dr David Edwards MBBS MSc, GP
Specialist in Male /Female Sexual Dysfunction
President of the British Society for Sexual Medicine

“Lubricants play a vital and essential role in the treatment of many sexual difficulties and in treating the vaginal dryness that commonly occurs after menopausal vaginal atrophy. I have used Yes on many patients over a number of years and have found it to be easy to use, safe, free of side-effects and economical in application.”

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