

Vaginal dryness is a common problem experienced by most women at some time during their life.

Vaginal dryness is more likely to happen when estrogen levels are low such as:

- After giving birth (especially while breastfeeding)
- During perimenopause (usually the late 40s)
- After menopause (whether natural menopause or as the result of surgery)
- During periods of stress
- After cancer treatment (especially those which affect the ovaries such as chemotherapy or radiation treatment)
- When using certain medications for the treatment of fibroids or endometriosis
- During periods of heavy smoking
- When using some medications such as certain antidepressants, allergy, and cold medications



Watch the  
**Understanding & Managing  
Vaginal Dryness**

video as seen on Canadian Health & Family

[www.healthandfamily.ca/vaginaldryness](http://www.healthandfamily.ca/vaginaldryness)



A lifestyle resource dedicated to women  
and vaginal health

[www.facebook.com/repagyn](http://www.facebook.com/repagyn)

Other resources:

The Society of Obstetricians  
& Gynaecologists of Canada (SOGC)  
[www.sogc.org](http://www.sogc.org)

North American Menopause Society  
[www.menopause.org](http://www.menopause.org)

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This has been provided by an educational grant from BioSynt Pharma Inc., the makers of RepaGyn®

RG-18112

## Understanding & Managing Vaginal Dryness

# Why suffer in silence?



# Get relief!

## What is happening in perimenopausal women?

When estrogen levels are normal, the vagina is lined by many layers of cells. These cells produce moisture, protect the vagina against bacteria, and provide lubrication. The many layers of cells allow the vagina to stretch, making intercourse comfortable.

When estrogen levels are low in perimenopausal women, there are fewer layers of cells lining the vagina. They produce much less moisture, less lubrication, and the vagina becomes less stretchy. As well, decreased estrogen may expose the delicate inner tissues, like the clitoris and urethra, to irritation from things like clothing.

## Why do cancer patients experience it?

Women who have had hormone-sensitive cancers (such as breast cancer) often experience vaginal dryness and pain due to their cancer treatment. Medications to keep estrogen levels low (aromatase inhibitors) may make these symptoms much worse.

There is some debate and controversy around the use of vaginal estrogens in this particular group of women. Use of lubricants, moisturizers, and moisturizers with tissue repair agents are safe and often provide relief.

## Don't let discomfort get in the way

Women who experience vaginal dryness are more likely to have pain during intercourse and are more likely to avoid intimacy. This may impact them, their partner, and their relationship. Vaginal pain, burning, or discomfort can affect your overall sense of well-being and quality of life. Another issue may be recurrent infections, which are both bothersome and may require repeated visits to healthcare providers.

## Know your topical options\*

### Non-hormonal and non-prescription products:

#### Lubricants

- Most helpful if the only symptom is dryness during sexual activity
- Applied prior to intercourse; immediate acting, but may be short-lived (re-application may be necessary to reduce friction)
- Water and silicone-based lubricants tend to be less irritating
- Experiment to find the best one for you

#### Moisturizers

- Most helpful if experiencing vaginal dryness and irritation on a regular basis
- Inserted into the vagina every 3-4 days; act by drawing moisture into the cells of the vagina, causing them to become 'plump'
- Have been shown to improve dryness, pH balance, and reduce irritation and pain with sexual activity

#### Moisturizers Containing Tissue Repair Agents (HA)

- Most helpful in repairing injured tissue
- Vaginal suppositories or creams inserted into the vagina daily or 2-3 times weekly
- Contain hyaluronic acid (HA) which binds to water and creates a protective moisture layer in the vagina which aids in the healing of the tissue

### Requires a prescription and contains hormones:

#### Local (Vaginal) Estrogens

- Minuscule amounts of estrogen are inserted into the vagina, first daily then twice weekly
- Available in creams, tablets, and a long-acting slow release ring
- Considered the 'gold standard' in treatment of vaginal symptoms related to vaginal atrophy
- Local estrogen is the only treatment which also reduces recurrent urinary tract infections

\* Some products may not be used in certain situations (e.g. pregnancy and breastfeeding). Please consult your doctor to find out which product is appropriate for you.

## Vaginal health is important for all women.

Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about vaginal dryness and your vaginal health today!

Start the conversation with your doctor by sharing your identified symptoms below.

- Vaginal itching or burning
- Dryness during regular daily activities
- Discomfort not involving sexual activity
  - Painful intercourse
- Light bleeding after intercourse
- Frequent or recurrent urinary tract infections
- More frequent trips to the bathroom to urinate

