

Menopause and Vaginal Dryness

Menopause marks the end of your childbearing years, typically occurring between ages 40-58. As uncomfortable as vaginal dryness can feel, it can be equally uncomfortable to discuss – even with your doctor. But there's no need to fear. It's a common symptom and your doctor won't be scandalized to hear about your experience. Between 40-50 percent of women experience vaginal dryness.

Why the Dryness?

Most commonly, vaginal dryness (and itching) is due to a condition called vaginal atrophy, which is the result of the loss of estrogen associated with menopause. Women with vaginal atrophy may also feel a more frequent and urgent need to urinate, and an increase in urinary tract infections.

Vaginal atrophy and dryness can make sex painful. The dryness and itching can also become hard to ignore, making it difficult to ever get comfortable.

Talk to your doctor right away if you're experiencing vaginal dryness. Other conditions can cause dryness as well and it's important to determine the underlying cause.

Treatment Options

There are many effective treatment options for vaginal dryness. Below are the most common. Your doctor can help you determine the best one for you.

Over-the-Counter Lubricant

Helps make sex more comfortable. When lack of lubrication is due to lack of arousal, foreplay can help.

Over-the-Counter Moisturizer

Helps vaginal tissue stay moist. These can be used daily or several times a week (unlike lubricants).

Minimally Absorbed Vaginal Estrogen

Helps reduce symptoms as well as rebuild cells and restore some of the vagina's elasticity. Your doctor can prescribe vaginal hormones as a ring, cream or tablet for applying directly to the vagina.