



Atrophic or Menopausal Vaginitis

Vaginal thinning and dryness results from a decline in estrogen that accompanies menopause. Some women experience vaginal problems during perimenopause, but this usually becomes a more significant problem 5 -10 years after menopause.

Lubrication of the vagina in response to sexual arousal occurs more slowly with aging. With the drop in estrogen, the vaginal lining becomes thinner, less elastic and the vagina become smaller. Burning and itching can also occur which can also make intercourse more painful and difficult.

The best way to combat vaginal atrophy is with estrogen replacement. Either systemic estrogen replacement (i.e. pills or a patch) or vaginal estrogen can be prescribed. The vaginal estrogen can be administered as a cream (Estrace or Premarin cream), a vaginal tablet (Vagifem) or by a vaginal ring (Estring).

Vaginal estrogen is absorbed only by the vaginal tissues and does not increase the amount of estrogen in the blood stream. It does not help with other menopause symptoms. Progesterone is not necessary with vaginal estrogen.

Frequent intercourse increases blood flow to the vagina helps maintain lubrication. Water soluble vaginal lubricants such as K-Y jelly or Astroglide may also help with vaginal dryness.