



VAGINAL DRYNESS

Vaginal dryness is a common, normal, and natural occurrence. A decrease in female hormone levels, or estrogen, brought about by a variety of reasons, is the primary cause of vaginal dryness. Vaginal dryness affects more than 25 million women at one time or another.

Vaginal dryness can affect each woman differently. It is important to remember to contact your gynecologist or regular medical doctor about specific concerns. Below are answers to some common questions about vaginal dryness.

Q. WHAT CAUSES VAGINAL DRYNESS?

A. A lack of sufficient lubrication can occur for many reasons, depending on the woman and her particular situation. Some of the most common reasons are:

- Menopause - Menopause is a natural part of aging. As a woman matures and approaches menopause, her estrogen levels drop, which can cause vaginal dryness. While most women experience menopause naturally, some women may undergo premature menopause caused by a surgical removal of the ovaries, the organs responsible for producing estrogens. Following the surgery, the production of estrogen decreases abruptly, often leading to vaginal dryness.
- New mothers - Normal hormonal levels are not always reestablished immediately after delivery. The common cause of "postpartum" vaginal dryness can be the hormonal imbalance that can occur from breast-feeding. In addition, stress to the vagina from the trauma of childbirth, an episiotomy, or from a vaginal tear or laceration, can cause temporary vaginal dryness.
- The Pill - Oral contraceptives affect all parts of the body with synthetic hormones. These hormones can cause both physiological and psychological (such as stress and tension) changes that result in vaginal dryness.
- Emotional Stress - Everyday stress may also lead to lack of lubrication. Nervous tension and fatigue can contribute to this problem, as well.
- Other surgery, infection, and even various medications can lead to vaginal dryness in many cases.
- Vaginal dryness can occur after a menstrual period or after tampon use.

Q. COULD THERE BE A LINK BETWEEN MY LACK OF VAGINAL LUBRICATION AND MY INABILITY TO ENJOY SEXUAL INTERCOURSE?

A. Yes. Vaginal dryness can cause friction and tissue irritation, resulting in discomfort and pain from sexual intercourse. This is known as dyspareunia.

Q. IS VAGINAL DRYNESS ONLY A CONCERN FOR WOMEN WHO ENGAGE IN SEXUAL ACTIVITY?

A. No. Vaginal dryness can cause discomfort such as painful urination, frequent urination, or feelings of frequent urination, particularly in postmenopausal women.

Q. WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT VAGINAL DRYNESS?

A. If the cause of vaginal dryness can be ascertained, an attempt at curing the problem may be easy. Replacement of missing hormones or correction of a hormone imbalance may be all that is needed. Changing birth control medications, allowing adequate time to heal after childbirth, and addressing stress problems may all be beneficial in certain circumstances. In many cases, the exact cause is not ascertainable and a vaginal lubricant such as Astroglide, Lubrin, Lubafax, or K-Y jelly might be recommended.

Q. HOW DO VAGINAL LUBRICANTS WORK?

A. K-Y jelly or Lubafax are inexpensive non-specific lubricants that are water-soluble. They can be placed directly into the vagina and provide quick and temporary lubrication. They are not medicated. Astroglide is specifically used as a vaginal lubricant for vaginal dryness or sexual intercourse and simulates vaginal lubrication for a longer period of time. It is colorless, unscented, and non-staining. Lubrin inserts are the pre-measured vaginal inserts that provide lubrication for vaginal dryness or for sexual intercourse. Lubrin is also an unscented, colorless, non-staining product that simulates the body's natural lubrication for several hours and may be inserted 5 to 30 minutes before intercourse.

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