



## **Atrophic Vaginitis & Vaginal Dryness**

### **What Is Atrophic Vaginitis?**

Atrophic vaginitis is an inflammation or irritation of the vagina caused by the thinning of the vaginal lining and by a decrease in lubricating secretions of the vagina. This is often associated in postmenopausal women or women who have had the removal of both ovaries because of their lower estrogen levels. It has also been noted in women immediately after childbirth, or in women who have received vaginal or pelvic radiation.

Symptoms include vaginal soreness, vaginal discharge, burning or itching especially during urination or after sexual intercourse, painful sexual intercourse, or vaginal spotting.

### **How Is Atrophic Vaginitis Diagnosed?**

Your doctor will perform a pelvic exam to determine if the vaginal walls are inflamed or appear thin and pale. A vaginal swab to determine infection or abnormal cells may be performed.

### **Can It Be Prevented?**

To slow or prevent the process of thinning and shrinking of the vaginal tissue, your doctor may suggest performing "Kegel" exercises on a regular basis. Kegel exercises involve the tightening and loosening of the pelvic floor muscles as if you are stopping and starting urine flow.

An increase in sexual activity has been found to increase the blood flow to the vaginal wall and therefore strengthen and tone the muscles surrounding that area.

### **What Is The Treatment For Atrophic Vaginitis?**

Your doctor may suggest the use of a topical Estrogen cream to be applied vaginally. If menopause has occurred, then your doctor may suggest an estrogen replacement therapy. A vaginal lubricant can be used to alleviate pain and discomfort during sexual activity.

### **What Causes Vaginal Dryness?**

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

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

**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.

### **Could There Be A Link Between My Lack Of Vaginal Lubrication And My Inability To Enjoy Sexual Intercourse?**

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

### **Is Vaginal Dryness Only A Concern For Women Who Engage In Sexual Activity?**

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

### **What Can I Do About Vaginal Dryness?**

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

### **How Do Vaginal Lubricants Work?**

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 to 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.