Non-estrogen treatments for menopausal symptoms

Non-estrogen-based treatments are for women who do not wish to take estrogen-based menopausal hormone therapy (MHT) either through choice or because of concerns about comorbidities such as venous thromboembolism, or a personal or family history of hormone-dependent cancer (e.g. breast cancer).

Treating hot flushes
• **Medical treatments** include:
  • clonidine
  • paroxetine
  • citalopram
  • venlafaxine
  • desvenlafaxine
  • gabapentin
  • pregabalin
• The above treatments tend to be less effective than **systemic estrogens** (MHT).
• New medicines are in development and currently being assessed in clinical trials.
• **Cognitive-behavioral therapy** can be accessed with self-help books and online.

Treating vaginal dryness
• **Lubricants** are typically used episodically to correspond to sexual activity.
• **Moisturizers** are usually used on a regular basis, rather than episodically in association with sexual activity.
• **Ospemifene** is a selective estrogen receptor modulator (SERM) and taken orally.
• **Prasterone** or **dehydroepiandrosterone** is taken vaginally.
• **Laser therapy** (ablative and non-ablative) is a new approach, but large, long-term studies are required to explore its efficacy and safety.

Drug interactions
Before a medical treatment is started, it is important to check that it will not have interactions with any other medicines, such as those used for breast cancer.

Estrogen-based MHT can be used with vaginal lubricants and moisturizers but its combination with ospemifene or prasterone has not been studied.

Further information
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