

Menopause and gynecological conditions:

Vulvovaginal atrophy

Vulvovaginal atrophy affects around 50% of postmenopausal women. It is a chronic, progressive condition related to estrogen deficiency. Hormonal or non-hormonal treatments can relieve symptoms, but recurrence is common after cessation.

Symptoms

- Vaginal dryness
- Burning, itching, irritation
- Uncomfortable, painful intercourse
- Bleeding after intercourse

Non-hormonal management

Vaginal lubricants

- May be water, silicone, hyaluronic acid or oil based
- Are usually used prior to intercourse
- Provide temporary relief of symptoms

Vaginal moisturizers

- May contain a bioadhesive polycarbophil-based polymer
- Are usually used on a regular basis, typically two or three times per week
- May cause local irritation

Other options

- Pelvic floor muscle training
- Laser therapy

Women should not be denied long-term use of topical estrogen if they feel that it is of benefit.

Non-hormonal options should be considered first for women taking adjuvant endocrine therapies for hormone-dependent cancers.

Topical vaginal estrogens

- May contain estradiol, estriol, promestriene and conjugated estrogens
- Preparations include tablets, rings, capsules, creams, gels and ovules
- Most are low-dose and do not change systemic estrogen levels (there is no need to add progestogen for endometrial protection when low-dose topical estrogens are used)
- Can be used alone or with systemic menopausal hormone therapy
- May also improve urinary incontinence and prevent recurrent **urinary tract infections**
- Do not increase the risk of endometrial cancer, breast cancer, venous thromboembolism or cardiovascular disease
- Do not improve vasomotor symptoms or prevent osteoporosis
- May be used in **breast cancer survivors** with collaborative decision-making, including the patient's breast oncology team, if non-hormonal treatments are unsuccessful

Other hormonal options

- **Oral** ospemifene
- **Vaginal** prasterone

Further information

British Menopause Society (2025). Consensus statement genitourinary syndrome of menopause <https://thebms.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/09-NEW-BMS-ConsensusStatement-Genitourinary-Syndrome-of-Menopause-GSM-NOV2025-B.pdf>

International Menopause Society (2025). Recommendations and key messages on women's midlife health and menopause <https://doi.org/10.1080/13697137.2025.2585487>