

Gynaecology Department

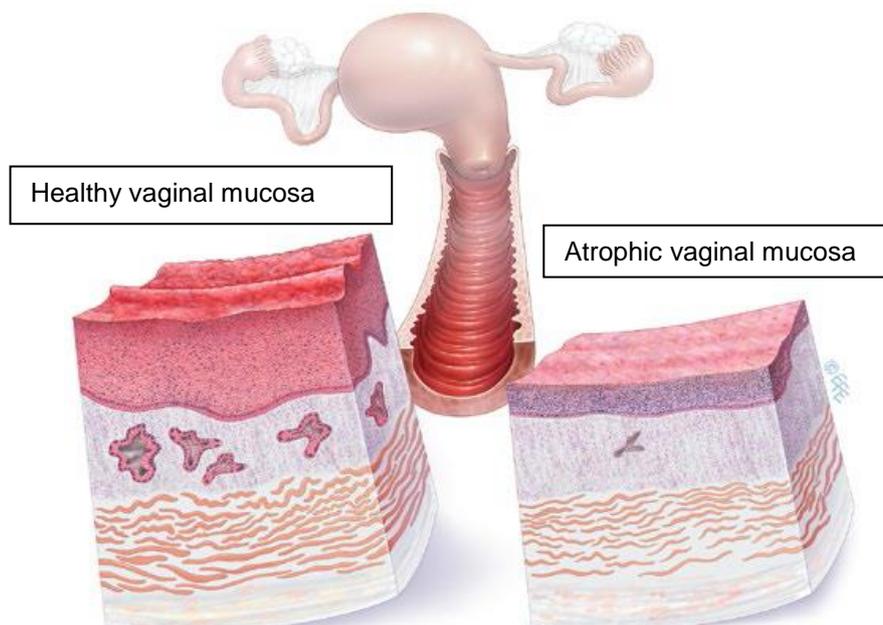
Low Dose Vaginal Oestrogen Therapy

Why should I use local vaginal oestrogen?

Local oestrogen is used to treat urogenital atrophic skin changes. This is a medical term that describes the skin changes that occur in the vagina, urethra (tube from the bladder) and vulva when the ovaries no longer produce oestrogen after menopause. This can lead to changes in the acidity of the vagina leading to the skin becoming dry, thinned, sore and less lubricated.

Women who have vaginal atrophy can present with discomfort or pain with intercourse, increasing vaginal discharge and irritation, or a burning sensation. The aim of low dose vaginal oestrogen is to relieve these symptoms.

The skin changes that take place in the tube from the bladder (urethra) and in the base of the bladder (the trigone) may result in symptoms of urinary frequency or urgency and discomfort passing urine. You may also be more prone to urinary tract infections. Local intravaginal oestrogen can help to relieve these symptoms.



What is intravaginal oestrogen therapy?

This involves oestrogen being applied directly to the vagina, where it works locally to improve the quality of the skin by normalising its acidity and making it thicker and better lubricated. The advantage of using local therapy rather than systemic therapy (i.e. hormone tablets or patches, etc.) is that much lower doses of hormone can be used to achieve good effects in the vagina, while minimising effects on other organs such as the breast or uterus. Vaginal oestrogen comes in several forms such as vaginal tablet, creams or gel or in a ring pessary.

Is local oestrogen therapy safe for me?

Vaginal oestrogen preparations act locally on the vaginal skin, and minimal, if any oestrogen is absorbed into the bloodstream. They work in a similar way to hand or face cream. If you have had breast cancer and have persistent troublesome symptoms which aren't improving with vaginal moisturisers and lubricants, local oestrogen treatment may be a possibility but consultation with your oncologist should take place first.

Which preparation is best for me?

Your doctor will be able to advise you on this but most women tolerate all forms of topical oestrogen. Studies have shown that all preparations are equally as effective in relieving symptoms.

If I am already on HRT do I need local oestrogen as well?

Not usually, but if you continue to have vaginal symptoms despite using HRT, your doctor may prescribe vaginal oestrogen as well. This is especially common if you are on a very low dose of HRT. In this way you can improve your vaginal symptoms without the need for a higher dose of HRT. Vaginal lubricants such as KY jelly may also be helpful if your main symptom is vaginal dryness during intercourse.

Further Information

If you have any questions or would like further information, you can telephone the **Gynaecology Department on 024 7696 7000**. Alternatively, you may also find the web link below helpful.

International Urogynaecological Association:

<http://www.iuga.org/?page=patientinfo>

Patient Information

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact 024 7696 7000 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

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