

## Genitourinary Syndrome of the Menopause

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The reduction in estrogen in perimenopause and menopause can lead to changes within the vagina and urogenital tissues which can cause the vagina to become thin, dry, itchy, and less elastic resulting in painful sex for some women. It can affect the bladder contributing to overactive bladder and recurrent urinary tract infections. These symptoms are known as genitourinary syndrome of the menopause (GSM). GSM is a common menopausal symptom and can often occur several years after menopause.

Vaginal moisturisers and lubricants are non-hormonal products which can help vaginal symptoms. Vaginal moisturisers are usually long acting and applied every few days. They don't affect the integrity of condoms. Examples include the brands Sylk, Yes, Olive & Bee, Multi Gyn, Regelle, and many others. Trial and error may be required to find the product that suits you best. Lubricants are usually applied prior to intercourse and can be oil-based or water-based. Water-based lubricants should be used if a condom is required.

Vaginal estrogen is a very effective treatment for GSM and it usually consists of a very small amount of estrogen inserted into the vagina where it works on the vaginal tissue and surrounding area. There is very little absorption into the general circulation. It is not linked with an increased risk of breast cancer. It may be used as a 2<sup>nd</sup>-line treatment option for women with a history of hormone-sensitive cancers, but the British Menopause Society still advises caution with aromatase inhibitors.

### **Vaginal Oestrogen**

TYPE	DOSE	Frequency
Vagifem (pessary)		
Imvaggis (pessary)		
Vagirux (pessary)		
Ovestin (cream)		
Blissel (gel)		
Estring (ring)		

**For further information and resources:**

**Menopause, HRT and POI:**

Women's Health Concern: [www.womens-health-concern.org](http://www.womens-health-concern.org)

Menopause Matters: [www.menopausematters.co.uk](http://www.menopausematters.co.uk)

Daisy Network: [www.daisynetwork.org](http://www.daisynetwork.org)

Ireland's Menopause Campaign: [www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/menopause/](http://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/menopause/)

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) "NICE Guideline (NG23) Menopause Diagnosis and Management" [www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng23](http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng23)

International Menopause Society: [www.imsociety.org/](http://www.imsociety.org/)

**Sexual Health and Wellbeing**

HSE sexual health and wellbeing resource: [www.sexualwellbeing.ie](http://www.sexualwellbeing.ie)

**Pelvic Floor and Bladder:**

International Urogynaecological Association: [www.yourpelvicfloor.org](http://www.yourpelvicfloor.org)

St Michaels Hospital, Pelvic Floor Centre: [www.stmichaels.ie/videos](http://www.stmichaels.ie/videos)

[www.bladdermatters.co.uk](http://www.bladdermatters.co.uk)

**Podcasts**

Cork Arc Cancer Support webinar on exploring female sexuality and intimacy after a cancer diagnosis: <https://corkcancersupport.ie/exploring-female-sexuality-and-intimacy-after-a-cancer-diagnosis/>