VAGINAL DRYNESS

Thank you for asking about vaginal dryness, pain, irritation and sexual discomfort. This is a VERY common condition, especially in menopause. You are not alone! This sometimes occurs with low dose birth control pills or during breastfeeding. Symptoms occur because of atrophy—low amounts of estrogen - and, unfortunately, it tends to get worse over time unless you actively use a regular regimen to maintain healthy, soft, supple, well-functioning normal tissue.

First, it is important to have an exam to make sure that there are no other issues at hand such as a yeast infection, allergic reaction, sexually transmitted disease, abnormal tissue growth, etc. Then, if we determine the cause of the symptoms to be simply thin, dry, delicate, atrophic tissue, there are many treatment regimens that can be used to keep that area feeling better.

1. Lots of women need a personal LUBRICANT for sexual relations. Choose the one that you and your partner enjoy the most. Some readily available (grocery or natural food store) options are:

- **Water Based:** KY Jelly (needs reapplication due to evaporation)
- **Glycerin Based:** Replens, Astroglide (tends to get sticky)
- **Natural:** Zesta (borage oil as a natural warming stimulant)
  - Good Clean Love (water, aloe), Yoni Cream (organic oils, beeswax, glycerin)
- **Oils:** Vitamin E, Hemp, Almond, Olive, Grapeseed, Coconut, etc. (only tiny amount needed)
  - Avena Botanical Vaginal Dryness Oil (calendula, st. johns, plainlain, comfrey)

2. Most all menopausal women need more HEALING, moisturizing and constant maintenance with topical salves on a regular basis, ranging from 1 – 7 nights per week, per their symptoms. Most women get the best results from massaging their choice of topical product with a firm pressure into and around the vaginal opening. Some women also need to use a vaginal dilator (or have regular penetration) to keep the vaginal opening from contracting in too tightly.

**Over-the-counter** choices are:

- **Indian Meadow Herbal Vaginal Balm** (camomile, oat flower, calendula, oils)
- **Femmesil** (silver oxide designed to calm skin, treat infections and heal tears)
- **Vitamin E cream** (choose all natural brands with no chemicals or preservatives)
- **Replens** (apply as needed, gives immediate wet feeling, but no real ‘healing’ properties)

**Prescription** options include hormonal products, in a low dose, topical form used 1-3 nights per week, or in a higher dose, systemic regimen used on a daily basis. Individualized therapy is needed based on each woman’s personal history and goals.

- **Topical Estrogen:** Cream: Estrace, Premarin, Compounded Estrogens
  - Ring: Estring (3 month intravaginal ring); Tablet Vagifem (intravaginal tablet)
- **Systemic Estrogen:** Tablet: Estrace, Premarin, Duavee, Cenestin, Activella, FemHRT, etc.
  - **Patch:** Climara or Vivelle, **Ring:** FemRing, **Gel:** EstroGel, Divigel, Femtrace
  (Systemic Estrogen Requires Systemic Progesterone if a woman has a uterus in place.)
- **Topical Steroid:** for Lichen Sclerosis, Lichen Simplex, eczema, psoriasis, allergic reaction

I hope this handout helps you with understanding and treating your condition.