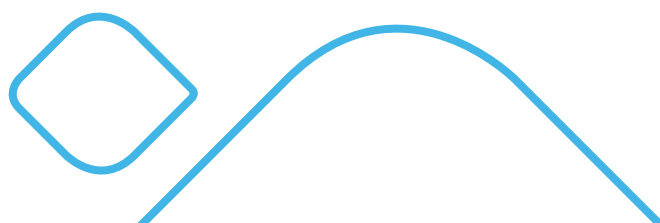


Genitourinary syndrome of menopause

This leaflet will explain:

- What is genitourinary syndrome of menopause?
- What are the symptoms?
- Am I at risk?
- What are the potential complications?
- Treatment
- Contact details



Genitourinary Syndrome of Menopause or vaginal atrophy is the thinning of the walls of the vagina caused by decreased oestrogen levels. Women with Genitourinary Syndrome of Menopause have a greater chance of chronic vaginal infections and urinary problems. It can also make sexual intercourse painful.

What are the symptoms?

In some women, symptoms occur during peri-menopause, or the years leading up to the menopause. In other women, symptoms may not appear until years later, if ever.

Symptoms can include:

- Thinning of the vaginal walls
- Shortening and tightening of the vaginal canal
- Lack of vaginal moisture (vaginal dryness)
- Vaginal burning (inflammation)
- Spotting of blood after intercourse (always see your GP for advice if this occurs)
- Discomfort or pain during intercourse (regular sexual activity helps to keep vaginal tissues healthy)
- Pain or burning with urination
- More frequent urinary tract infections
- Urinary incontinence (involuntary leakage)
- Urinary frequency

Am I at risk?

- Women who have never given birth vaginally are more prone to vaginal atrophy
- Smoking impairs blood circulation, depriving the vagina and other tissues of oxygen. Tissue thinning occurs where blood flow has decreased
- Taking tamoxifen (a treatment for breast cancer) can also put you at greater risk.

What are the potential complications?

[If you Genitourinary Syndrome of Menopause increases a woman's risk of contracting vaginal infections. The acidic environment of the vagina changes, making it easier for bacteria, yeast and other organisms to thrive. It also increases the risk of urinary system atrophy (urogenital atrophy). Symptoms such as the frequent need to urinate or an urgent need to pass urine can



occur, along with a burning sensation during and after urination. Some women may have incontinence and experience more urinary tract infections.

Treatment

It is possible to improve your vaginal health and your quality of life. Specific over the counter moisturisers or water-based lubricants can help treat dryness. If symptoms are severe, your doctor may recommend a topical oestrogen (This can be used along with systemic HRT).

Oestrogen improves vaginal elasticity and natural moisture. It also improves your natural protection from urine infections.

Contact details:

If you have any concerns or need further advice please contact the urology department at the Royal United Hospital, Bath.

During office hours Monday to Friday 9am-5pm:-

- Urology Reception 01225 825990
- Urology Nurse Specialists 01225 824034

Please note the nurses' numbers have an answerphone as they may be in clinic but all answerphones are checked regularly and messages responded to

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If you would like this leaflet in email form, large print, braille or another language, please contact the Patient Support and Complaints team on 01225 825656.

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