Vaginal Dryness in Your 40s: Why It Happens & How to Fix It Transcript

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Understanding Vaginal Dryness

If you're over 40 and If you're over 40 and experiencing experiencing experiencing vaginal dryness, vaginal dryness, discomfort, or discomfort, or pain, and the only advice pain, and the only advice you've heard is to you've heard is to use use use lubricant, you've been lubricant, you've been seriously misled.

seriously misled. Lubricant is the Lubricant is the least you least you can do, and it can do, and it doesn't solve the doesn't solve the problem itself. So in this problem itself. So in this video, I'll talk about video, I'll talk about three effective three effective treatments that treatments that doctors doctors doctors rarely mention, why you're never rarely mention, why you're never too too too young for therapy, and young for therapy, and why why why things won't things won't get better without proper attention. I'm Dr. Jen, an obstetrician- gynecologist and integrative integrative medicine specialist, and I want to make something clear. It's not just about. It's not just about sex, and you're not too sex, and you're not too young. What you young. What you are feeling has a name. This is called. This is called genitourinary genitourinary genitourinary menopausal menopausal menopausal syndrome. And this is the syndrome. And this is the main difference main difference from other symptoms.

from other symptoms.

Why Hormone Changes Can Affect Vaginal Health

Hot flashes Hot flashes go away over time, and this condition, go away over time, and this condition, if ignored, if ignored, usually usually usually gets worse. The good gets worse. The good news is that it is news is that it is treatable with treatable with much better much better remedies than just remedies than just lubricants or over-the-counter medications. The first over-the-counter medications. The first treatment method is something that almost everyone gets wrong almost everyone gets wrong, because they confuse two, because they confuse two things: lubricants and things: lubricants and vaginal vaginal vaginal moisturizers.

moisturizers. moisturizers. Lubricant Lubricant Lubricant is used is used is used directly directly directly during sex to during sex to reduce friction. It is reduce friction. It is useful, but it is a useful, but it is a temporary solution and has to be applied again applied again and again. It does not and again. It does not affect the affect the tissues themselves in any way. Vaginal tissues themselves in any way. Vaginal moisturizer is a moisturizer is a completely different thing. You completely different thing. You can can can use it use it regularly, every regularly, every few days, or every day, regardless of, regardless of whether you plan to have sex.

whether you plan to have sex. It is actually It is actually absorbed and absorbed and restores restores restores tissue hydration over time. Look for a tissue hydration over time. Look for a vaginal vaginal vaginal moisturizer based on moisturizer based on hyaluronic acid —the same —the same ingredient ingredient ingredient used in used in skin care.

skin care.

Common Symptoms You Shouldnu2019t Ignore

Because it attracts Because it attracts moisture and holds it in the moisture and holds it in the tissues. It does not tissues. It does not contain hormones, contain hormones, is available over is available over the counter, and most the counter, and most women women women have never been told the difference.

have never been told the difference. You don't need a You don't need a prescription to prescription to buy it. If buy it. If you previously only you previously only used used used lubricant during lubricant during sex, switching to a sex, switching to a regular regular regular moisturizer will help moisturizer will help get rid of daily get rid of daily discomfort and discomfort and improve the situation improve the situation even during even during intimacy.

intimacy. intimacy. The second The second treatment method is the “ gold standard” gold standard” that almost no one that almost no one offers to women over 40: offers to women over 40: low-dose low-dose low-dose vaginal estrogen. This is. This is life-changing. This is a life-changing. This is a small amount of small amount of estrogen that is estrogen that is inserted inserted inserted directly into the directly into the vagina. It can be a vagina. It can be a cream, pill, or cream, pill, or ring, and ring, and unlike a moisturizer, this unlike a moisturizer, this remedy addresses the very remedy addresses the very cause of cause of tissue degradation—low tissue degradation—low estrogen levels. It's estrogen levels. It's effective for effective for vaginal dryness vaginal dryness and painful sex, and and painful sex, and here's something here's something most women don't most women don't know about. It also know about.

What Happens During Menopause

It also helps with helps with recurrent recurrent recurrent urinary tract infections urinary tract infections and that constant and that constant feeling of "gotta feeling of "gotta run, gotta run" run, gotta run" because the tissue lining the bladder is the same as the bladder is the same as the tissue lining the tissue lining the vagina. Because the dose is vagina. Because the dose is very low and acts very low and acts locally, it is locally, it is considered safe considered safe for the vast for the vast majority of women, and majority of women, and you don't have to you don't have to wait until you wait until you actually enter actually enter menopause. You menopause. You can actually can actually use this in use this in your 20s, in your 30s, your 20s, in your 30s, if necessary.

if necessary. If you have symptoms If you have symptoms now, this is always an now, this is always an option to consider, option to consider, regardless of age. The regardless of age. The third third third treatment method is one that treatment method is one that almost no one has almost no one has heard of: vaginal heard of: vaginal DHEA, also known DHEA, also known as prasterone. It's a as prasterone. It's a small small small prescription suppository, and what makes it prescription suppository, and what makes it special is special is that your own that your own tissues convert tissues convert it into estrogen. So it into estrogen. So it can be it can be converted converted converted into either estrogen or into either estrogen or testosterone, depending testosterone, depending on what the on what the tissues need. It is tissues need. It is FDA-approved for FDA-approved for the treatment of pain the treatment of pain during sex due to during sex due to menopause, and it is a menopause, and it is a great option for great option for women who experience women who experience vaginal burning, vaginal burning, irritation, and irritation, and dryness. It is an dryness.

Treatment & Relief Options

It is an alternative to alternative to alternative to estrogen and can be estrogen and can be used in used in used in much the same way as much the same way as topical topical topical testosterone. The fact that so many women have that so many women have never heard of never heard of this option is exactly the this option is exactly the problem problem problem this video is trying to fix.

this video is trying to fix. Now, if you Now, if you don't want to don't want to use use use anything vaginally at all, anything vaginally at all, there's an option for you too.

there's an option for you too. This is also a highly This is also a highly advertised advertised advertised treatment that I treatment that I want you to be want you to be careful about careful about before spending before spending a lot of money on it.

a lot of money on it. I will talk about both I will talk about both options, as well as what options, as well as what exactly to tell exactly to tell the doctor to get the the doctor to get the right treatment.

right treatment. Stay with me, Stay with me, because this is the part that because this is the part that protects you. First, the protects you. First, the bonus option.

bonus option. If you don't If you don't want want want to use to use to use anything vaginally at all, anything vaginally at all, there is a prescription there is a prescription pill called pill called Ospena that treats Ospena that treats painful sex and painful sex and dryness during dryness during menopause without being an menopause

without being an estrogen and without estrogen and without being applied to the being applied to the vagina. This is truly an vagina. This is truly an oral medication. This is a real FDA-approved drug. Now, FDA-approved drug. Now, about the method about the method you've probably you've probably seen advertised— seen advertised— vaginal laser vaginal laser or energy or energy treatments that treatments that promise promise promise tissue rejuvenation. I'm not saying tissue rejuvenation. I'm not saying never never never use use use vaginal lasers. I'm vaginal lasers. I'm saying that at this saying that at this point you have to point you have to make sure that make sure that the tissue is actually the tissue is actually healthy. So, healthy. So, using using using estrogen or DHEA estrogen or DHEA to improve to improve tissue condition will make tissue condition will make vaginal lasers vaginal lasers work better. They are work better. They are only for rejuvenation, only for rejuvenation, but they do not actually but they do not actually reverse reverse reverse tissue aging. So just tissue aging.

What You Can Do Today

So just be be be careful before careful before jumping on the bright jumping on the bright advertising bandwagon. As with other advertising bandwagon. As with other marketing marketing marketing campaigns, you just campaigns, you just want to make sure you want to make sure you have all the have all the information before you information before you jump into jump into treatment. Okay. So, treatment. Okay. So, here is the text for your here is the text for your doctor. "I have doctor. "I have vaginal dryness and vaginal dryness and discomfort and I want discomfort and I want to discuss options with you to discuss options with you besides besides besides regular regular regular lubricant. Can lubricant. Can we discuss we discuss regular regular regular vaginal vaginal vaginal moisturizer or low-dose vaginal estrogen or low-dose vaginal estrogen or DHEA?" This sentence DHEA?" This sentence opens a dialogue opens a dialogue that you can that you can have with your have with your doctor to doctor to find out what find out what treatment options treatment options he is willing to he is willing to prescribe for you. At home, you prescribe for you. At home, you can also can also use a use a use a mild soap for mild soap for your vulva and avoid your vulva and avoid harsh soaps and harsh soaps and scented scented scented products, as these will products, as these will increase irritation.

increase irritation. If you are experiencing If you are experiencing pain, I strongly pain, I strongly recommend seeing a pelvic floor therapist. They are pelvic floor therapist. They are excellent specialists, excellent specialists, will help you will help you identify the source of your identify the source of your pain, and can pain, and can assist with assist with pelvic pelvic pelvic floor physical therapy. The sooner the floor physical therapy. The sooner the better, as this will better, as this will generally help generally help reduce pain during reduce pain during sex. So if you sex.

Key Takeaways

So if you take one thing take one thing from this video: you're from this video: you're not too young, it not too young, it won't go away on its own won't go away on its own, and lube isn't the only option.

isn't the only option. Start with a Start with a regular over- regular over- regular over- the-counter vaginal moisturizer and ask the-counter vaginal moisturizer and ask your doctor about low-dose vaginal estrogen and low-dose vaginal estrogen and DHEA; It's best DHEA; It's best to treat it sooner rather than to treat it sooner rather than later. This is your later. This is your comfort, your comfort, your intimacy, and your intimacy, and your urinary tract health, urinary tract health, and you deserve and you deserve real options, real options, not excuses. When not excuses. When comfort returns, many women, many women notice that the main notice that the main change is the change is the return of desire, and return of desire, and that's another conversation that's another conversation with its own methods of with its own methods of resolution. In the resolution. In the next video, I'll next video, I'll talk about what to do talk about what to do about low sex about low sex drive during drive during perimenopause and perimenopause and post it right post it right here. Check it out