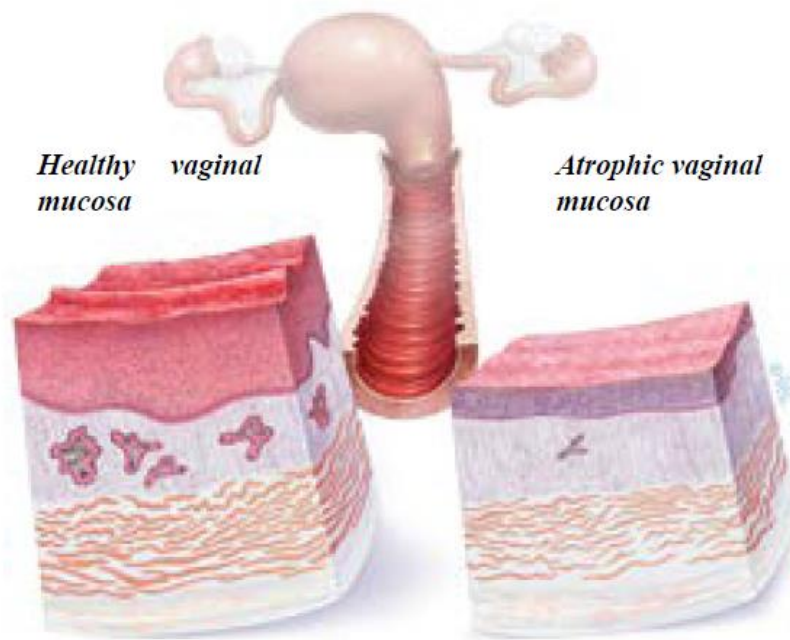




**Southport and  
Ormskirk Hospital**  
NHS Trust

## **PATIENT INFORMATION**

# **Low-Dose Vaginal Estrogen Therapy**



## **Why should I use vaginal estrogen?**

Local estrogen 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 estrogen 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 estrogen is to relieve these symptoms.

The skin changes that take place occur in the tube from the bladder (urethra) and in the base of the bladder (the trigone). These changes 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 estrogen can help to relieve these symptoms

### **What is intravaginal estrogen therapy?**

This involves estrogen being applied directly to the vagina, where it works locally to improve the quality of the skin by normalizing 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 minimizing effects on other organs such as the breast or uterus. Vaginal estrogen comes in several forms such as vaginal tablet, creams or gel or in a ring pessary.

### **Is local estrogen therapy safe for me?**

Vaginal estrogen preparations act locally on the vaginal skin, and minimal, if any estrogen 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 moisturizers and lubricants, local estrogen treatment may be a possibility. Your Urogynecologist will coordinate the use of vaginal estrogen with your Oncologist. Studies so far have not shown an increased risk of cancer recurrence in women using vaginal estrogen who are undergoing treatment of breast cancer or those with history of breast cancer.

### **Which preparation is best for me?**

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

If I am already on hormone replacement therapy (HRT) do I need local estrogen as well? Not usually, but if you continue to have vaginal symptoms despite using HRT, your doctor may prescribe vaginal estrogen 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 may also be helpful if your main symptom is vaginal dryness during intercourse and vaginal moisturizers may help restore moisture and can be used every few days as needed.

For more information, visit  
[www.YourPelvicFloor.org](http://www.YourPelvicFloor.org).

## **Notes**

**During your contact with us, it is important that you are happy with your care and treatment. Please speak to a member of staff and/or the ward/department Sister/Charge Nurse if you have questions or concerns.**

## **MATRON**

A Matron is also available during the hours of 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday. During these periods, ward/department staff can contact Matron to arrange to meet with you. Out of hours, a Senior Nurse can be contacted via the ward/department to deal with any concerns you may have.

## **INFECTION CONTROL REQUEST**

Preventing infections is a crucial part of our patients' care. To ensure that our standards remain high our staff have regular infection prevention and control training and their practice is monitored in the workplace. We ask patients and visitors to assist us in preventing infections by cleaning their hands at regular intervals and informing staff of areas within the hospital that appear soiled.

As a patient there may be times that you are unsure whether a staff member has cleaned their hands; if in doubt please ask the staff member and they will be only too happy to put your mind at ease by cleaning their hands so that you can see them.

## **SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS**

### **ANY CONDITION SPECIFIC DANGER SIGNALS TO LOOK OUT FOR:**

### **CONTACT INFORMATION IF YOU ARE WORRIED ABOUT YOUR CONDITION**

- Your own GP

### **OTHER USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS/CONTACTS:**

NHS 111

Stop Smoking Helpline (Sefton) – 0300 100 1000

Stop Smoking Helpline (West Lancashire) – 0800 328 6297

**Please call 01704 704714 if you need  
this leaflet in an alternative format**

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Tel: (01695) 577111

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**FOR APPOINTMENTS**

Telephone (01695) 656680  
Email [soh-tr.appointments@nhs.net](mailto:soh-tr.appointments@nhs.net)

Please remember to complete the **attached** *Friends and Family Test*.

Alternatively, you can complete the *Friends and Family Test* on-line by going to:  
[southportandormskirk.nhs.uk/FFT](https://southportandormskirk.nhs.uk/FFT)

**Thank you**

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