

Maintaining Vaginal Health at Menopause

- Try a topical Estrogen, or Estrogen and Progesterone Cream. It does not carry the same risks as oral Estrogen because its action is mostly local. Using estrogen, with or without progesterone on the labial tissues can help increase circulation to the pelvic area, re-hydrate tissues, and strengthen cell walls. **If you have a personal history or family history of estrogen positive cancers you will want to avoid using these.
- Increase water intake to 64oz a day.
- Kegel exercises can help increase circulation to the pelvic areas and can also help treat incontinence. Many women claim to have a more rapid sexual response when doing Kegels as well. Start with 25 contractions throughout the day, working your way up to 50. To perform Kegels, one must contract the pubococcygeus muscle. This is the muscle that stops urination. To locate it, try to stop the flow of urine for three seconds mid-stream. Once you've felt where the muscle is located you can contract it when not urinating as well. For the first few days you may want to do your contractions while on the toilet. Avoid these exercises if you have a urinary tract or bladder infection.
- Take an antioxidant. Taking vitamins A, C, and E, selenium, or Co-enzyme Q10 can help protect tissues from damage.
- Avoid harsh, perfumed soaps and douching. These tend to be very drying. Instead, try gentle baby soap or moisturizing soap.
- Try oatmeal sitz baths. Grind oatmeal into a fine powder and add a ¼ cup to your bath. Make sure to allow it to reach the vaginal area. If you're worried about the oatmeal clogging your drain you may wish to take a "sitz bath" instead. This is done by using a large basin which contains warm water and oatmeal to sit in, rather than filling the whole tub. Place the basin in the tub to keep from spilling it (and you may put a few inches of warm water in the tub so that you won't get chilled). Afterwards, you may rinse off in the shower and pour the oatmeal bath down the sink.

- Use a natural lubricant when having sex. This helps to both increase sexual pleasure and keep tissues from being irritated. Don't use a warming or scented lubricant, as they may contain irritating ingredients.
- Indulge in sexual stimulation frequently! Starting with slow, gentle foreplay, sexual intimacy can increase circulation, moisture, and disease-fighting enzymes in the vaginal area.
- Take some time each day to visualize your vaginal tissue as healthy, pink, and moist. Also focus on feeling the breath travel all the way down to the pelvic area.