



NATURAL

# MENOPAUSE

SUPPORT

## VAGINAL HEALTH

*Resolving dryness and microbial balance*



# VAGINAL AND VULVAL HEALTH - COMMON CONCERNS

- Vaginal dryness/atrophy
  - “Genito-urinary syndrome of menopause”
- Prolapse – bladder, uterine or rectal
- Vulval atrophy
- Sensation changes
- Pelvic floor weakness
- Bacterial imbalances
- Candida



# WHAT IS GOING ON?

- Drop in Oestrogen causes mucous membranes and skin of the vulva and vagina to age more rapidly, and so may thin and feel drier.
- The symptoms affect approximately 13% of pre and 40% of postmenopausal women, however only 20-25% of women actually seek treatment.





# WHAT IS GOING ON?

- Your stage of menopause will determine the causes
- Hormonal changes also alter the vaginal pH which increases susceptibility to bacterial imbalance
  - Thrush (Candida)
  - Bacterial Vaginitis
- Drops in oestrogen levels alter the tissues of the genitourinary system:
  - Vulva
  - Vagina
  - Clitoris and clitoral hood
  - Perineum potentially up to the anus
  - Bladder and urethra
  - Tone of muscles within pelvic cavity



# SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Pain during vaginal penetration
- Bleeding after intercourse
- Decreased arousal
- Touch perception altered
- Prolapse – uterine, bladder or bowel
- Increased frequency/risk of vaginal infections
- Vaginal itching and discomfort
- Discharge changes
- Discomfort or pain can be experienced in other instances e.g. pap smears, sitting, wearing pants, exercise



# PERIMENOPAUSE

- If Oestrogen has not declined fully yet but is experiencing dips, there is less likelihood that the atrophy has occurred but dryness or other vaginal discomfort may be due to these factors:
  - Altered vaginal pH
  - Stress
  - Pelvic floor dysfunction





# SEEKING HELP

- If any of these issues sound like something that is bothering you, chances are you have had hesitations about speaking to your practitioner.
- It's also possible you have been concerned about any vulval or vaginal investigations because you're worried about pain. THAT'S OKAY!
- Sometimes you may need to shop around to find an empathetic practitioner, but remember to:
  - Feel okay to mention your symptoms and concerns.
  - If you need a procedure ask for:
    - Smallest speculum
    - Additional lubrication

And it's okay to ask to pause at any point, and give feedback on pain as this helps your doctor to perform the speculum in a way that is less painful and gives information on what is happening for you.

Practitioners that you may want to consider seeing:

- Naturopath
- GP
- Women's Health Physiotherapist, particularly those with an interest in menopause
- Sexologist
- Counsellor and or Psychologist



# RELATED ISSUES

*Prolapse, Urinary  
Tract Infections and  
Vaginal Infections*





# PROLAPSE

- Bladder or anal prolapse can also be related to the changes that occur with this, as the front and the back wall of the vagina become thinner and lose strength.
- If you do experience prolapse we recommend a combination of the recommendations below for vaginal dryness as well as seeing a women's health physiotherapist who can fit you for a simple, removable device that can help to support the walls of the vagina (ontop of exercises when needed).
- Acupuncture can also be helpful.
- Herbal medicine is specific to the person but may include:
  - Ladies Mantle
  - Cramp Bark
  - Shepherds Purse



# FUNGAL INFECTIONS

- The most common type of vaginal fungal infection is *Candida albicans*.
- It is possible to have colonisations of other 'rare' fungus
- Infections – both fungal and bacterial, can occur when there is too much diversity (this is the opposite of what we want for digestive health), and when the pH shifts allowing this overgrowth to occur.
  - Declining oestrogen can cause the pH to shift.



# INCONTINENCE, URINARY TRACT INFECTIONS AND CYSTITIS

## UTIs and Cystitis

- Mucous membrane change can cause an increased risk for damage in this area, causing an inflammatory reaction to occur more intensely from bacterial imbalances
- Microbiome changes in genito-urinary and gastro-intestinal area
- Other possible causes
  - Poor hygiene
  - Diet
    - Consider: Sugar, oxalates, histamine, dehydration, acidity
  - Lowered immunity
  - Food intolerances
    - Can disrupt the immune system and microbiome

## Incontinence

Pelvic floor muscles can be affected by the change in hormones

Combined with mucous membrane changes this can be an issue

If the bladder is irritability because of bacterial imbalance this increases urgency

A women's health physiotherapist alongside the other approaches discussed in this module can be helpful.





# OTHER CONDITIONS THAT CAN OCCUR

- Lichen sclerosis
- Vaginismus, vulvodynia, clitorodynia
- Malignancy
- Trauma
- Foreign bodies (e.g. mesh)



# NATURAL TREATMENT

*Different  
for  
everyone*



Loss of Oestrogen

- Tx: Phyto-oestrogen foods and herbs, Liver and gut support

Increased aging:  
Reduced  
circulation

- Non penetrative stimulation
- Exercise

Reduced viscosity  
and quantity of  
natural lubrication

- pH friendly lubricants
- Adequate foreplay
- Omega fatty acids





# HERBAL MEDICINE

- Red clover
  - Tablets, tincture/extract or tea
- Fennel seeds
  - 5% in an oil based pessary or cream
- Black cohosh
  - Source from herbalist or Naturopath
  - Can be helpful for hormonal balance
- Comfrey
  - Not for oral use
  - Can apply as a cream or as a sitz bath
  - Source from herbalist or dried herbal suppliers, or grow your own
- Chickweed
  - A common garden weed.
  - Soak briefly dried chickweed in olive oil or coconut oil for 5-6 weeks, then apply liberally



# HERBAL MEDICINE

- Mallow
  - A common garden weed/
  - 2tbsp fresh herb infused in 1L cold water overnight, then brought to the boil and steeped for an hour.
  - Use as a sitz bath or add to regular bath.
- Oatstraw
  - Use dried herb.
  - Infuse 100g: 4L, boil then steep for minimum 4 hours. Add to a hot bath, reserving a few cups to drink.





# NUTRIENTS

- Sea buckthorn oil - 3g per day for 3 months on and off.
- Vitamin E – insert vaginally everyday for 8 weeks
- Zinc 30mg/day
- Vitamin A and D – good sources are liver, or cod liver oil supplements





# HOMOEOPATHICS

- Always best when prescribed by a practitioner
- Consider the following:
- **Bryonia:** root chakra overheated and dry, dry vagina, dry stools/constipation
- **Lycopodium:** lack of root stability, vagina very dry, self-confidence withered, skin dry
- **Belladonna:** vagina painfully dry and too sensitive to tolerate touch



# DIET

*What to include,  
What to avoid*





# FOODS TO INCLUDE

- Foods rich in phyto-oestrogens:
  - Sprouts
  - Legumes
  - Seeds
  - Soy if tolerated
- Omega fatty acid rich foods
  - Omega 7: Sea buckthorn juice and berries
  - Omega 3: Seafood (choose low mercury, sustainable options), Nuts and Seeds, Avocado, Grass fed meats
- Vitamin A rich foods
  - Liver, Seafood
  - Betacarotene converts into Vitamin A if adequate zinc and B6: most vegetables





# FOODS TO INCLUDE

## *Moistening Foods*

- Seaweed
- Water rich vegetables



# LIFESTYLE

*Tips and tricks*



# IMPROVING CIRCULATION

- Masturbation
  - Improves circulation
  - Many types of vibrating devices are available from discrete websites e.g.
    - Nourished Life
    - Love Honey
- Foreplay
- Non penetrative intercourse
- Resource:





# LUBRICATION

- Choose a lubricant that does not alter the pH or microbiome.
- Brands we suggest include:
  - Yes Yes Yes
  - Wet Stuff
- Make your own – boil flaxseeds and strain the gel off, and keep it in the fridge



# SUPPORTIVE DEVICES

## Resources

- [www.thepelvichub.com](http://www.thepelvichub.com)
  - Dilators
  - Oh Nuts
  - Cooling Pads
- 
- [Instructions for using dilators](#)





# FENNEL PESSARIES AND CREAMS

- A lovely natural way to increase moisture as a safe phytoestrogen and moisteriser

## PESSARY

- Use 2 parts cocoa butter : 1 part infused fennel oil
- To infuse fennel oil, maceration ground fennel seeds in a 2:10 ratio for at least 2 weeks, shaking jar regularly. Choose oils such as olive oil or cold pressed sesame oil
- Optional : vaginal probiotics
- Store in the fridge

## CREAM

- Research shows it helpful in improving sexual function in menopausal women
- 5% fennel extract in a cream
- Source extract from herbalist, naturopath or make your own
- Base cream should not contain mineral oil, parabens, glycerine or propylene glycol which can damage the epithelial tissue and act as endocrine disruptors.
- pH should be 3.7-4.6
- If no suitable moisteriser available use coconut oil
- Store in the fridge





# CONVENTIONAL TREATMENT OPTIONS

- Hormone replacement therapy (HRT) – Systemic and local
- Body identical hormonal therapy
- Testosterone or DHEA
- Anti-depressants
- Moisturisers
- Lubricants





A close-up, high-angle shot of a vast field of tulips. The flowers are in various stages of bloom, with colors ranging from pale pink to deep magenta. The petals are layered and ruffled, creating a textured, almost abstract pattern of soft pinks and whites. The lighting is bright and natural, highlighting the delicate details of the flower petals.

# COMPLETE YOUR WORKSHEET

Next Module:  
Mental Health