

About Atrophic Vaginitis

Parkland Health & Hospital System Vulvology Clinic



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What is atrophic vaginitis?

Atrophic vaginitis is a problem of the skin of the vulva and vagina. It happens when there is not enough of a hormone called estrogen in your body. Atrophic vaginitis can happen at any age. It most commonly happens in women:

- Who have gone through menopause (the change).
- Whose ovaries have stopped making estrogen.
- Who have had surgery to take out their uterus and ovaries.

It can also happen in women:

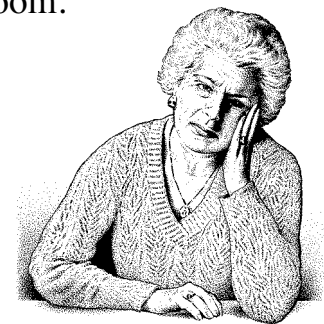
- Who are breast-feeding.
- Using Depo-Provera.
- Have had their ovaries taken out.

Lower levels of estrogen can cause skin changes in the vulvar and vaginal areas as well as in the cervix, urethra and bladder. With these changes, the skin becomes thin and is more easily damaged. Atrophic vaginitis does not happen to all women.

How will I know if I have atrophic vaginitis?

You may have:

- Trouble with urination (peeing), such as:
 - going to the bathroom very often.
 - finding it hard to hold the urine till you reach a bathroom.
 - leaking urine.
 - having pain when you urinate (pee).
- Itching and/or a burning feeling in the vulvar area.
- Vaginal bleeding and spotting
- Pain during sex.
- Dryness of the vagina.



How will my doctor or healthcare provider check for atrophic vaginitis?

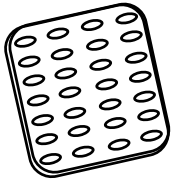
Your doctor or healthcare provider will look for skin changes that may be found with atrophic vaginitis. Vaginal discharge will also be checked.

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How should atrophic vaginitis be treated?

1. **Vulvar skin care.** Keep the vulvar skin as clean and dry as possible. Follow the instructions on the Vulvar Skin Care handout.
2. **Estrogen Replacement Therapy.** This helps to build up your body's estrogen levels. There are 2 ways to do this:

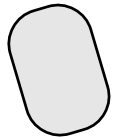
a) Systemic Estrogen Replacement - this gets estrogen to your whole body. It takes many weeks or even months of treatment before the vulvar/vaginal symptoms get better.



- Oral Estrogen. You take an estrogen pill prescribed for you by your health care provider. Some of the most common brands are Estrace, Ogen, Orthoest and Premarin.



- Transdermal Patch. This is a patch that you put on your abdomen (belly) once a week, and it gives the estrogen through your skin. Some of the most common brands are Climara and Estraderm.



- If you still have your uterus and you are taking the estrogen pill or using the patch, your healthcare provider may want you to take a hormone called progesterone along with the estrogen. Some of the most common brands are Provera and Cytrin.

b) Topical Vaginal Estrogen Replacement. This is a cream that gets estrogen only to the part of your body where you apply it. It is the other way to build up estrogen levels in your vulvar/vaginal skin. The cream is put into the vagina with a vaginal applicator, or put right on to the vulvar skin. Estrogen cream is a faster way to make the vulvar/vaginal symptoms better. Some of the most common brands are Dienestrol, Estrace, Ogen and Premarin.

