



Non Hormonal Ways to Treat Menopausal Symptoms

Hot Flashes/Flushes

Estrogen is a highly effective treatment for menopausal vasomotor symptoms, but for women with hot flashes who wish to avoid estrogen, moderately effective alternative treatments are available. These include antidepressants in the selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor (SSRIs), serotonin-norepinephrine reuptake inhibitor (SNRIs) classes as well as clonidine, an antihypertensive.

The SSRI and SNRI antidepressants, even in very low dosages, have been shown to help with hot flashes and are generally safe for most patients.

An antihypertensive medication- clonidine patches- have been shown to help many women. If your blood pressure tends to be low we would need to be especially cautious with this medication.

Non-hormonal, non prescription preparations are also used by many women. Vitamin E in doses of 400-800 Units per day helps some women. If used, this should be discontinued a week before procedures to minimize the risk of excessive bleeding.

Soy and Black Cohosh, alone or together are used by many women. Soy is usually consumed at ~60 grams per day (or ~60mg of flavinoids).

Nonestrogen treatment of dry vagina

There are many vaginal moisturizers available for use, including: Replens, Me Again, Vagisil Feminine Moisturizer, Feminease, and K-Y Silk-E. These moisturizers are best used at least one or more times per week. In two small studies, the vaginal moisturizer Replens was reported to be similar in effectiveness to vaginal estrogen treatment.

Although vaginal estrogen is superior to vaginal moisturizers for providing patients with relief from symptoms of dry vagina, but moisturizers are more effective than no treatment.

The vaginal pH levels in premenopausal and postmenopausal women are <4.5 and >5.0, respectively. A new moisturizing gel that contains lactic acid may help create a more acidic vaginal pH, which may decrease vaginal irritation, dryness, and painful intercourse more than a gel without lactic acid. Luvena is a “bioengineered” vaginal moisturizer and lubricant that contains ingredients to suppress the growth of anaerobic bacteria and to reduce the development of a harmful vaginal biofilm.

Many postmenopausal women with symptoms of dry vagina use a vaginal moisturizer on a regular basis and also use a lubricant prior to sexual intercourse. Many lubricants are available, including Astroglide, Slippery Stuff, K-Y Jelly, Pjur Eros, ID Millennium, and Elegance Women’s Lubricant.

You can also try hydrogenated vegetable oil as a lubricant. For example, Crisco is a hydrogenated vegetable oil that is solid at room temperature and has been reported to be an effective lubricant for vaginal dryness.

Application of a small amount of Crisco to the posterior vaginal area creates a protective and lubricated layer over the skin most susceptible to trauma during sexual intercourse. To make application easier, the Crisco can be removed from its container and stored in a small decorative glass jar by the bedside or in the bathroom.

Adapted from R Barbieri, MD; OB-GYN Management 2013