

Why do I have these symptoms and how can you help me?

Genitourinary Syndrome of Menopause is the medical term for the constellation of symptoms which occur as a result of loss of estrogen due to menopause. These include vaginal dryness, painful intercourse, urinary tract and vaginal infections, urinary urgency, frequency and incontinence.

These symptoms can be improved and sometimes totally eliminated! How? Several safe and effective options are available.

1. Vaginal Estrogen (Premarin, Estrace, Estring, Vagifem, Yuvaferm, Femring):

This is the oldest and best studied option. This does NOT have the same risks as systemic estrogen. Numerous long term studies show no increased risk of breast cancer or blood clots. The blood levels of estrogen, in fact, are virtually unchanged. It is available as twice weekly creams or tablets, or a vaginal ring which is replaced every three months.

2. Ospheña (Ospemifene): This is a once daily oral tablet which is not an estrogen

and not a hormone at all. It is a SERM, a selective estrogen receptor modifier. It turns on estrogen receptors but only in selective places. In this case, the receptors are turned on in the vagina and also in the bone. If you have osteoporosis or osteopenia, this might be a good choice for you, since you will be helping two problems at once. Common side effects: hot flashes (20 %), leg cramps (3%). Studies in breast cancer patients are underway but are not yet completed and so this is still not recommended for patients with breast cancer or patients who have had recent stroke or heart attack since it showed slight increases in risk of thrombotic stroke.

3. Intrarosa (DHEA): This is a once daily vaginal suppository which is a hormone but

also not estrogen. It will make the same cellular changes in the tissue as the other three options. It is the newest option and more information can be found at intrarosa.org. It appears to be a safe option for ER+ breast cancer patients.

4. CO2 Laser (Mona Lisa Touch): This is everybody's favorite because it is easy,

quick, painless and requires nothing ongoing from patients. There is no estrogen, no hormone, in fact no medication at all. There are virtually no risks or side effects. This is a five minute laser treatment done in our office. There is no down time and no preparation, although we suggest you abstain from sex for two days following the treatment. This is currently not covered by insurance and requires three treatments over a 12 week period and an annual "touch up."

5. Vaginal Moisturizers (Hyalogyn, Luvena, Replens): these do not improve the

cells, but they do create a more moist intravaginal environment. They are good band-aids but they are just that.