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## Using Vaginal Estrogen Cream .01% Rx

You have been prescribed a vaginal estrogen cream to use topically. This prescription will treat dryness related to loss of estrogen. This medication is used whether your loss of estrogen is from menopause, use of hormonal birth control, or from having PCOS or other similar hormonal conditions.

This is a prescription that you pick up at the pharmacy. This medication is low dose and minimally absorbed. It is different than a lubricant, and different than a vaginal moisturizer. You can think of it like a conditioner.

The hormonal changes that occur in the vagina also affect the tissue around the opening of the vagina and the urethra.

**HOW TO USE:** Usual instructions are to take ½ gram of the one-gram dose and massage it in gently around the opening of the vagina and the labia (lips) including the clitoris and clitoral hood. The other half gram goes up inside the vagina using the applicator from the pharmacy, or your fingers. If you are beginning the prescription, you will be advised to use it daily for one to two weeks, then reduce to twice a week. It takes a few months for the tissue to get back to the thickness it had been before the hormonal change. If your symptoms reoccur when you do this, you will want to increase back to twice a week. You do not use estrogen cream before sexual activity if you have a male partner.

Estrogen prescriptions for inside the vagina are also written for rings (Estring: a ring that is placed inside the vagina and releases low dose Estrogen daily for three months) or suppositories (Vagifem or custom compounded). These methods deliver estrogen to the vagina internally. Often when a woman uses rings or suppositories, she will still benefit from some estrogen cream applied externally around the opening to the vagina where there is pressure and friction during intercourse and other sexual activity.

Compounded vaginal estrogens creams can be without parabens, propylene glycol, and other chemicals that can irritate the vulva when cracks or fissures are present, or when there is skin sensitivity. There are bio-identical options for both compounded and non-compounded prescriptions.

Vaginal estrogens in these low dose minimally absorbed forms have not been shown to cause an increased risk of breast or endometrial/uterine cancer. Current research shows no increase in the risk of stroke.

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