

Female Vaginal Changes

Female vaginal health is closely associated with changes to estrogen levels after menopause or childbirth. Decreased estrogen levels lead to changes that cause thinning and drying of the vaginal and vulvar tissue.

Estrogen replacement therapy can be used as a pill or topically as a lotion. However, some women may choose not to use these treatments, especially in the setting of an estrogen-responsive cancer history. Laser vaginal treatment may be used as another option to treat vaginal and urinary symptoms.

What Does the Laser Treat?

- vaginal dryness
- urinary stress incontinence
- vaginal wall thinning
- vaginal burning
- External labia minora appearance

How Does the Laser Vaginal Treatment Work?

Laser treatment is a new non-surgical way developed to help improve female intimate health. The medical laser delivers controlled energy to the vaginal wall to boost collagen production.

The carbon dioxide laser (CO₂) laser is the most established laser and has been extensively studied for vaginal health treatment and genitourinary symptoms of menopause. The fractional CO₂ laser treats the vaginal wall by delivering microchannels of energy. This promotes local collagen synthesis, improved blood flow, and connective tissue remodeling. The effect is to thicken, lubricate, tighten, and tone the vaginal wall. The pH is also restored to a more balanced value, improving the natural immune response to infection.

Who Can Have a Laser Vaginal Treatment?

Laser vaginal treatment work best with the following women in good general health (subject to review by a physician), with updated and clear Pap tests:

- Non-cigarette smoker
- Good genital health
- No infections or active sores
- No cancer

A health evaluation must be performed to ensure there are no health conditions that may pose a high risk for laser treatment of the vagina or skin.

What to Expect

The laser treatment is short, and is done in the medical clinic. For menstruating women, this is best performed when there is no active bleeding. The clinic staff will help you prepare by adding a numbing cream for 30 minutes.

The laser procedure takes place in a private clinic procedure room and lasts approximately 15–20 minutes. There is a feeling of pressure on the wall, with sensitivity closer to the outer vagina.

There is slight soreness felt after the procedure but you are able to move and walk right away.

Recovery

After treatment, there is residual soreness in the vagina for a few days. A light liner or pad may be used for spotting which may last a few days. Most women are able to return to normal activities after 1–3 days. Avoid sexual intercourse or tampon use for 7 days.

How Many Treatments Are Needed?

Two to four treatments in the office, spaced 4–6 weeks apart are generally needed. Following this period, annual treatments are needed to maintain the effects.

What Are the Side Effects and Risks?

Normal side effects include mild redness, swelling, and discomfort which resolve after 1–3 days. There may be temporary increased discharge that is tinged with blood during this period.

There is no guarantee of improving the sexual experience, orgasm, libido or desire as these are complex personal and relationship experiences.