

# Vaginal dryness

Vaginal dryness is a common problem that many women have at some point in their lives.

## Symptoms of vaginal dryness

You may have vaginal dryness if you:

- feel sore or itchy in and around your vagina
- feel pain or discomfort during sex
- need to pee more often than usual
- keep getting urinary tract infections (UTIs)

These things may make you not want to have sex.

## Causes of vaginal dryness

Vaginal dryness is often caused by things that change your hormone levels, including:

- the menopause
- breastfeeding
- taking contraceptive pills or antidepressants
- having your womb removed (a hysterectomy)
- cancer treatments, such as chemotherapy

The change in hormone levels can affect how much vaginal discharge or fluid you have.

You can also have vaginal dryness if you:

- are not aroused during sex
- use perfumed soaps, washes or douches (used to wash out the vagina) in and around your vagina
- have an underlying condition, such as diabetes or Sjögren's syndrome

## How to treat vaginal dryness yourself

You can try these things before you talk to your GP. You can get most of them from a pharmacy without a prescription.

## Do

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- ✓ use water-based lubricants before sex – put these in and around your vagina or on your partner's penis
- ✓ use vaginal moisturisers for vaginal dryness – you can put these inside your vagina to keep it moist
- ✓ use unperfumed soaps and washes around your vagina
- ✓ try to enjoy more foreplay so you feel more aroused during sex

## Don't

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- ✗ do not use perfumed soaps, washes or douches in and around your vagina
- ✗ do not put creams or lotions like petroleum jelly inside your vagina - these can cause an infection
- ✗ do not use moisturisers that are not for your vagina

## Talk to your GP if:

- it's been a few weeks and things you can try yourself are not working
- it's affecting your daily life
- you have unusual discharge or bleeding from your vagina
- you have bleeding after sex or in between your periods

If vaginal dryness is because of changes in your hormone levels, your GP can prescribe:

- creams
- gels
- patches
- medicines to increase a hormone called oestrogen - this is called HRT

Read more about [hormone replacement therapy \(HRT\)](#)

# Sláintecare.

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