

PATIENT INFORMATION**MANAGEMENT OF VAGINAL SYMPTOMS
INFORMATION FOR WOMEN WITH BREAST
CANCER**

Vaginal dryness is a common but treatable problem. The following information provides advice on how you can manage this distressing symptom safely and effectively.

Non hormonal management

It is recommended that non hormonal management of vaginal dryness is tried initially and can be used in addition to vaginal oestrogens.

Suitable preparations include:

Vaginal lubricants: these are applied just before sexual intercourse. Preparations include:

- *Sylk*,
- *Sensilube*,
- *Yes*, and
- *Replens* lubricant.

Many people have heard of KY Jelly but this is not a particularly effective lubricant.

Vaginal moisturisers: these can be applied regularly every few days and should be used at least 2 hours before sexual intercourse. Preparations include *Replens* and *Regelle*.

Emollients: preparations including zerocream, zerobase and cetaben are suitable to wash with instead of using soaps and shower gels.

Vaginal moisturisers and lubricants can be purchased over the counter or online. Emollients can also be purchased over the counter but your GP can also prescribe these if necessary.

Vaginal Oestrogens

Vaginal oestrogen preparations such as Vagifem pessaries can be used in all breast cancer patients, even if your cancer is oestrogen receptor positive, when symptoms are not controlled with lubricants, moisturisers and emollients.

The evidence is that the absorption of oestrogen from vaginal pessaries is extremely low and therefore the risks of use in breast cancer patients are extremely low.

It is recommended that 3 month courses of vaginal oestrogen should be used intermittently and this can be repeated as necessary to relieve symptoms. These should be used every night for 2 weeks initially then twice weekly for 3 months. Alternative include oestrogen creams (Ovestin or Estriol)

Your GP will be able to prescribe these for you and reassure you about their use.

General Information

The following websites provide information on the management of vaginal dryness. Your GP and your breast care nurse will also be able to provide information and address any concerns you may have.

NHS Choices <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/dry-vagina/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

Menopause matters <http://www.menopausematters.co.uk/>

If your symptoms or condition worsens, or if you are concerned about anything, please call your GP, 111, or 999.

Patient Experience

We know that being admitted to hospital can be a difficult and unsettling time for you and your loved ones. If you have any questions or concerns, please do speak with a member of staff on the ward or in the relevant department who will do their best to answer your questions and reassure you.

Feedback

Feedback is really important and useful to us – it can tell us where we are working well and where improvements can be made. There are lots of ways you can share your experience with us including completing our Friends and Family Test – cards are available and can be posted on all wards, departments and clinics at our hospitals. We value your comments and feedback and thank you for taking the time to share this with us.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

If you have any concerns or questions about your care, we advise you to talk with the nurse in charge or the department manager in the first instance as they are best placed to answer any questions or resolve concerns quickly. If the relevant member of staff is unable to help resolve your concern, you can contact the PALS Team. We offer informal help, advice or support about any aspect of hospital services & experiences.

Our PALS team will liaise with the various departments in our hospitals on your behalf, if you feel unable to do so, to resolve your problems and where appropriate refer to outside help.

If you are still unhappy you can contact the Complaints Department, who can investigate your concerns. You can make a complaint orally, electronically or in writing and we can advise and guide you through the complaints procedure.

How to contact PALS:

Telephone Patient Services: 0300 123 1732 or via email at: wah-tr.PALS@nhs.net

Opening times:

The PALS telephone lines are open Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 4.00pm. Please be aware that you may need to leave a voicemail message, but we aim to return your call within one working day.

If you are unable to understand this leaflet, please communicate with a member of staff.