ROAR

Understanding Sexual & Urinary Changes

What Changes, Why It Happens & What Can Help

WHAT TO EXPECT

During and after menopause, changes in estrogen and other hormones can affect your sexual health and urinary function. These changes are common, treatable, and can be managed with the right information, care and support.

WHY IT HAPPENS

The decline in estrogen during perimenopause and menopause can lead to natural changes in the vaginal, bladder and urethral tissues, including:

- Thinner, less elastic tissue
- Reduced natural lubrication
- Changes in the balance of the urinary system
- Greater sensitivity and a higher risk of irritation or infection

COMMON CHANGES

SEXUAL CHANGES

- Vaginal dryness and discomfort
- Changes in sensitivity or arousal
- Decreased libido (sex drive)
- Discomfort or pain with intercourse (dyspareunia)
- Changes in overall sexual satisfaction

URINARY CHANGES

- Increased frequency (needing to go more often)
- Urgency (a sudden, strong need to urinate)
- Leaking with coughing, sneezing or exercise (stress incontinence)
- Recurrent urinary tract infections (UTIs)
- A sense of bladder sensitivity or irritation

PRACTICAL CARE FOR COMFORT & HEALTH

- Use a high-quality vaginal moisturizer (regularly, not just during intimacy).
- Choose a water-based or silicone-based lubricant for greater comfort.
- Do pelvic floor exercises (Kegels) to strengthen bladder control and support sexual function.
- Stay well-hydrated and maintain good fluid intake.
- Follow a nutrient-rich, anti-inflammatory diet and maintain a healthy weight.

TREATMENT OPTIONS
(DISCUSS WITH YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER)

- ✓ **Local vaginal estrogen** (low-dose) — can improve vaginal dryness, comfort and urinary health with minimal systemic effects.
- ✓ **Menopausal hormone therapy (MHT)** — can relieve vaginal and urinary symptoms and also support overall well-being.
- ✓ **Non-hormonal options** — such as vaginal moisturizers, lubricants and certain prescriptions or over-the-counter treatments.

WHEN TO SEEK PROFESSIONAL CARE

- ✓ If you are experiencing **persistent or worsening** discomfort.
- ✓ If urinary urgency, leakage or frequent infections are affecting your quality of life.
- ✓ If pain during intimacy continues despite self-care strategies.
- ✓ To discuss whether hormone therapy or other treatments are right for you, based on your personal health history and risk factors.

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Supporting Intimacy, Confidence & Quality of Life

SUPPORTING INTIMACY & CONNECTION

- ✓ Keep the conversation open with your partner about changes and needs.
- ✓ Explore different forms of intimacy that feel comfortable and fulfilling.
- ✓ Use vaginal moisturizers or lubricants to reduce dryness and discomfort.
- ✓ Be patient and compassionate with yourself — your body is changing, and that's okay.

BLADDER & URINARY HEALTH — EVERYDAY TIPS

- ✓ Stay well-hydrated, but spread fluids throughout the day.
- ✓ Avoid common bladder irritants (e.g., caffeine, alcohol, acidic or spicy foods).
- ✓ Empty your bladder regularly and completely.
- ✓ Do Kegel (pelvic floor) exercises to strengthen bladder control.
- ✓ If you experience frequent urinary tract infections (UTIs), talk to your healthcare provider about prevention strategies.

HEALTHY HABITS FOR OVERALL WELL-BEING

- Stay active (especially strength training and core/pelvic floor work).
- Eat a nutrient-rich, anti-inflammatory diet.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Manage stress and prioritize quality sleep.
- Consider a holistic approach that combines lifestyle habits, self-care and medical treatment (when needed).

QUESTIONS FOR YOUR HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONAL

1. Are my sexual or urinary changes related to menopause?
2. What treatment options are right for me (e.g., local estrogen, MHT or non-hormonal)?
3. Can you recommend strategies to improve comfort and intimacy?
4. What can I do to reduce my risk of recurrent UTIs?
5. Are there lifestyle changes or other resources you recommend?

YOUR PERSONAL ACTION PLAN

- ☐ **Stay active** — include strength and pelvic floor exercises.
- ☐ **Focus on good nutrition** — aim for a balanced, nutrient-rich diet (e.g., adequate protein, calcium and vitamin D).
- ☐ **Support bone and muscle health** — through diet, physical activity and, if needed, supplements.
- ☐ **Stay well-hydrated** — and limit bladder irritants.
- ☐ **Use vaginal moisturizers or lubricants** — for comfort and to support intimacy.
- ☐ **Follow up with my healthcare provider** — to discuss treatment options and create a plan that's right for me.
- ☐ **Seek support and reliable information** — such as the Reference Information Handout for recommended books and podcasts.

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