

# VAGINAL DRYNESS

A MEDICAL DICTIONARY, BIBLIOGRAPHY,  
AND ANNOTATED RESEARCH GUIDE TO  
INTERNET REFERENCES



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**AND PHILIP M. PARKER, PH.D., EDITORS**

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## FORWARD

In March 2001, the National Institutes of Health issued the following warning: "The number of Web sites offering health-related resources grows every day. Many sites provide valuable information, while others may have information that is unreliable or misleading."<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, because of the rapid increase in Internet-based information, many hours can be wasted searching, selecting, and printing. Since only the smallest fraction of information dealing with vaginal dryness is indexed in search engines, such as **www.google.com** or others, a non-systematic approach to Internet research can be not only time consuming, but also incomplete. This book was created for medical professionals, students, and members of the general public who want to know as much as possible about vaginal dryness, using the most advanced research tools available and spending the least amount of time doing so.

In addition to offering a structured and comprehensive bibliography, the pages that follow will tell you where and how to find reliable information covering virtually all topics related to vaginal dryness, from the essentials to the most advanced areas of research. Public, academic, government, and peer-reviewed research studies are emphasized. Various abstracts are reproduced to give you some of the latest official information available to date on vaginal dryness. Abundant guidance is given on how to obtain free-of-charge primary research results via the Internet. **While this book focuses on the field of medicine, when some sources provide access to non-medical information relating to vaginal dryness, these are noted in the text.**

E-book and electronic versions of this book are fully interactive with each of the Internet sites mentioned (clicking on a hyperlink automatically opens your browser to the site indicated). If you are using the hard copy version of this book, you can access a cited Web site by typing the provided Web address directly into your Internet browser. You may find it useful to refer to synonyms or related terms when accessing these Internet databases. **NOTE:** At the time of publication, the Web addresses were functional. However, some links may fail due to URL address changes, which is a common occurrence on the Internet.

For readers unfamiliar with the Internet, detailed instructions are offered on how to access electronic resources. For readers unfamiliar with medical terminology, a comprehensive glossary is provided. For readers without access to Internet resources, a directory of medical libraries, that have or can locate references cited here, is given. We hope these resources will prove useful to the widest possible audience seeking information on vaginal dryness.

*The Editors*

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<sup>1</sup> From the NIH, National Cancer Institute (NCI): <http://www.cancer.gov/cancerinfo/ten-things-to-know>.



## CHAPTER 1. STUDIES ON VAGINAL DRYNESS

### Overview

In this chapter, we will show you how to locate peer-reviewed references and studies on vaginal dryness.

### The Combined Health Information Database

The Combined Health Information Database summarizes studies across numerous federal agencies. To limit your investigation to research studies and vaginal dryness, you will need to use the advanced search options. First, go to <http://chid.nih.gov/index.html>. From there, select the “Detailed Search” option (or go directly to that page with the following hyperlink: <http://chid.nih.gov/detail/detail.html>). The trick in extracting studies is found in the drop boxes at the bottom of the search page where “You may refine your search by.” Select the dates and language you prefer, and the format option “Journal Article.” At the top of the search form, select the number of records you would like to see (we recommend 100) and check the box to display “whole records.” We recommend that you type “vaginal dryness” (or synonyms) into the “For these words:” box. Consider using the option “anywhere in record” to make your search as broad as possible. If you want to limit the search to only a particular field, such as the title of the journal, then select this option in the “Search in these fields” drop box. The following is what you can expect from this type of search:

- **Physiology, Medical Management and Oral Implications of Menopause**

Source: JADA. Journal of the American Dental Association. 133(1): 73-81. January 2002.

Contact: Available from American Dental Association. ADA Publishing Co, Inc., 211 East Chicago Avenue, Chicago, IL 60611. (312) 440-2867. Website: [www.ada.org](http://www.ada.org).

Summary: Approximately 36 million women in the United States are in the postmenopausal phase of life. The physiological changes associated with spontaneous or surgical menopause (after surgical removal of both ovaries) cause some women to experience uncomfortable symptoms such as hot flashes, night sweats, and **vaginal dryness**. In addition, estrogen deprivation arising from menopause in association with age-related factors disproportionately increases the risk of developing cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis, Alzheimer disease, and oral disease. Hormone replacement

therapy (HRT, featuring estrogen or estrogen and progestin) often is prescribed on a short term basis to alleviate the uncomfortable symptoms associated with estrogen deficiency and on a long term basis to prevent some of the chronic illnesses common to postmenopausal women. This article reviews the physiology, medical management, and oral implications of menopause. Dentists who treat women entering menopause need to consider the stressful phase of life their patients are experiencing. Clinical findings of postmenopausal problems on dental examination may include a lack of saliva, increased dental caries (cavities), dysesthesia (reduced or altered sense of feeling), taste alterations, atrophic gingivitis (inflammation of the gums), periodontitis, and osteoporotic jaws unsuitable for conventional prosthetic devices or dental implants. Panoramic dental radiographs may reveal calcified carotid artery atheromas. The author stresses that dentists have an opportunity to refer women who are not under the care of a gynecologist for an evaluation to determine the appropriateness of HRT for its systemic and oral health benefits. 1 figure. 111 references.

- **Menopause: Transition with Balance**

Source: Diabetes Forecast. 54(3): 37-39. March 2001.

Contact: Available from American Diabetes Association. 1701 North Beauregard Street, Alexandria, VA 22311. (800) 232-3472. Website: [www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org).

Summary: This article discusses the challenges facing women who have diabetes during their transition to menopause. For most women, menopause occurs around the age of 51, and this natural transition is often accompanied by symptoms such as hot flashes, **vaginal dryness**, sleeplessness, and irritability. The years prior to menopause are referred to as the perimenopausal years. During this time, the menstrual cycle becomes more irregular and symptoms associated with menopause begin. For women who have diabetes, this is also the time when blood glucose levels fluctuate widely. Diabetes control may suffer because, as estrogen production decreases, the body may become more resistant to insulin. As the levels of estrogen and progesterone drop off permanently, the body once again becomes more sensitive to insulin. At this stage, hypoglycemia can occur more often. Menopause is also the time when a woman's risk for heart disease, osteoporosis, and other chronic health problems increases. Women who have diabetes already have an increased risk of heart disease and a slightly increased risk of osteoporosis. Symptoms associated with menopause, including hot flashes, moodiness, short term memory loss, sweating, and flushing, can be confused with the symptoms of both low and high blood glucose. Women who have diabetes need to check their blood glucose levels more often to determine whether they are experiencing a low or menopausal symptoms. **Vaginal dryness** and frequent vaginal and urinary tract infections can also occur during menopause. These problems can be made worse by persistent high blood glucose levels. Women can adjust their diabetes regimen to reduce the frequency of high and low blood glucose levels.

- **Celebrate Your Sexuality**

Source: Diabetes Forecast. 54(5): 73-74, 76. May 2001.

Contact: Available from American Diabetes Association. 1701 North Beauregard Street, Alexandria, VA 22311. (800) 232-3472. Website: [www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org).

Summary: This article reviews steps women who have diabetes can take to rekindle sexual intimacy regardless of their age. First, women should ask themselves whether the sexual difficulties they are experiencing pose a real problem. Women who feel that they are missing out on something they once enjoyed should talk with their health care

provider. A thorough examination will rule out any physical problems that could be interfering with libido. Women should also discuss any emotional problems they may be having in their relationship and should inform their doctor if they are feeling depressed. Women may experience sexual desire, but may still have problems feeling aroused. **Vaginal dryness** may indicate a problem with arousal. This problem can be caused by certain medicines, vaginal infections, neuropathy, or poor circulation. Nonprescription vaginal lubricants may help. Some women may feel sexual desire and be able to become aroused, but they may still have trouble achieving orgasm. Many conditions contribute to this problem, including obesity, **vaginal dryness**, vaginal infections, and other vaginal conditions. Poor blood glucose control can also affect sexual pleasure.

- **Sex Hormones and Diabetes**

Source: Diabetes Reviews. 6(1): 6-13. 1998.

Contact: Available from American Diabetes Association. 1701 North Beauregard Street, Alexandria, VA 22311. (800) 232-3472. Website: [www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org).

Summary: This review article determines the changes in sex hormones and the mechanisms by which they occur in animals and humans with diabetes and then examines the effects of sex hormones on diabetes and the putative relationship these hormones might have to leptin levels. Several studies have indicated that men with diabetes have a decline in levels of total and free testosterone. This is caused by a failure of hypothalamic-pituitary function to adequately drive testosterone secretion, as well as a defect in testicular steroidogenesis. The possibility that testosterone would have salutary effects in men with diabetes is raised. In particular, testosterone appears to inhibit leptin production and thus may decrease insulin resistance. In women, the major effect of diabetes appears to be on the ovary. In rodents, diabetes results in a decrease in ovulation. In humans, rodents, and swine, diabetes in females is associated with hyperandrogenicity and a decline in levels of estradiol. Diabetes also appears to produce resistance to some of the effects of estradiol. Hyperandrogenicity in females, in contrast to males, is associated with insulin resistance. Oral contraceptives and postmenopausal estrogen replacement do not appear to have any major positive or negative effects on carbohydrate metabolism. Hormonal changes in both men and women with diabetes may lead to a decline in libido, a loss of the quality of the erection in men, and **vaginal dryness** that may be associated with dyspareunia in women. 2 figures. 2 tables. 70 references. (AA-M).

- **Coping with Sexual Dysfunction**

Source: Diabetes Self-Management. 15(5): 32, 34-36. September-October 1998.

Contact: Available from R.A. Rapaport Publishing, Inc. 150 West 22nd Street, New York, NY 10011. (800) 234-0923.

Summary: This review article provides information on sexual dysfunction in men and women with diabetes. Although knowledge of the effects of diabetes on women's sexual functioning is very limited, it is known that **vaginal dryness** is the most widespread sexual complication associated with diabetes. Other problems include inability to experience orgasm and loss of sensation in the genital region. The most common sexual complication among men with diabetes is impotence or erectile dysfunction. However, impotence may be caused by factors or conditions other than diabetes. Another sexual complication associated with diabetes in men is retrograde ejaculation, which may cause infertility because almost all of the ejaculate is discharged backward into the bladder.

Both sexes may experience yeast infections of the genitals, urinary tract infections, and loss of sexual drive. In addition, they are at increased risk for contracting sexually transmitted diseases. Probably the best doctor to diagnose the origins of a sexual complication of diabetes is a urologist. Ways of assessing the origin of sexual dysfunction include determining a person's sexual response during masturbation, observing whether a person experiences early morning erections or vaginal lubrication, and using other diagnostic tools. Intimacy may be kept alive by talking with one's partner about changes in one's sexual functioning and seeking professional counseling to learn how to communicate openly. In addition, accepting the fact that complications associated with a physical disability are part of being human may help a person cope with his or her disability. The article concludes with suggested additional sources of information on sexual difficulties.

## Federally Funded Research on Vaginal Dryness

The U.S. Government supports a variety of research studies relating to vaginal dryness. These studies are tracked by the Office of Extramural Research at the National Institutes of Health.<sup>2</sup> CRISP (Computerized Retrieval of Information on Scientific Projects) is a searchable database of federally funded biomedical research projects conducted at universities, hospitals, and other institutions.

Search the CRISP Web site at [http://crisp.cit.nih.gov/crisp/crisp\\_query.generate\\_screen](http://crisp.cit.nih.gov/crisp/crisp_query.generate_screen). You will have the option to perform targeted searches by various criteria, including geography, date, and topics related to vaginal dryness.

For most of the studies, the agencies reporting into CRISP provide summaries or abstracts. As opposed to clinical trial research using patients, many federally funded studies use animals or simulated models to explore vaginal dryness. The following is typical of the type of information found when searching the CRISP database for vaginal dryness:

- **Project Title: CLINICAL EVALUATION OF BOTANICAL DIETARY SUPPLEMENT**  
Principal Investigator & Institution: Derman, Richard J.; University of Illinois at Chicago  
1737 West Polk Street Chicago, IL 60612  
Timing: Fiscal Year 2002; Project Start 01-AUG-2002; Project End 31-JUL-2003  
Summary: The overall objectives of this project are to conduct Phase I and II clinical trials of black cohosh (*Cimicifuga racemosa*) and red clover (*Trifolium pratense*), to be used for women's health problems—for menopausal hot flashes (primarily) and other somatic symptoms. Observational and epidemiological studies demonstrated that black cohosh is effective for menopausal women, and safe (at least in short-term). Phase I: The aims of this study is to determine safe doses (acute toxicity) of extracts of both botanicals, to be used in the subsequent Phase II clinical trial. Three doses will be tested over a one-week period in an attempt to determine symptoms of acute toxicity. There will be 5 subjects for each of 3 dosages (1X, 2X, 3X) of the 2 botanicals. (N=30) The goal is a sample size large enough to estimate unknown parameters Also studied will be pharmacokinetics (hourly bloods) absorption, distribution, metabolism, elimination, and

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<sup>2</sup> Healthcare projects are funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services (SAMHSA), Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDCP), Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), and Office of Assistant Secretary of Health (OASH).

pharmacological mode of action and side effects in healthy menopausal women. Phase II: This is a one year, randomized, controlled, double-blind efficacy study, the primary aim of which is to evaluate the efficacy of black cohosh and red clover, over a "safe dose range," for menopausal hot flashes. Additional goals are to assess these botanicals for other menopausal symptoms such as insomnia, joint pain, **vaginal dryness**, and dyspareunia (using Kupperman Index, bleeding scales and index of sexual function). They will also assess longer-term risks and safety issues and to determine changes in biomarkers (such as bone turnover and lipids) associated with use of these botanicals. Most previous studies of black cohosh lasted at most 6 months. Longer-term (1-year) safety data will be evaluated. In particular, incidence of endometrial hyperplasia, breakthrough bleeding, and other side effects will be determined. Subjects (n=112) will be randomized into one of 4 treatment groups (28/gr): placebo, Prempro 0.625/2.5, black cohosh and red clover. Also they will take blood samples to measure DNA oxidation products for measurements of DNA strand breaks using the comet assay to determine if DNA in peripheral blood leukocytes is being protected from damage through the antioxidant properties of the 'active' compounds or whether DNA damage is being produced (indicator of toxicity).

Website: [http://crisp.cit.nih.gov/crisp/Crisp\\_Query.Generate\\_Screen](http://crisp.cit.nih.gov/crisp/Crisp_Query.Generate_Screen)

## The National Library of Medicine: PubMed

One of the quickest and most comprehensive ways to find academic studies in both English and other languages is to use PubMed, maintained by the National Library of Medicine.<sup>3</sup> The advantage of PubMed over previously mentioned sources is that it covers a greater number of domestic and foreign references. It is also free to use. If the publisher has a Web site that offers full text of its journals, PubMed will provide links to that site, as well as to sites offering other related data. User registration, a subscription fee, or some other type of fee may be required to access the full text of articles in some journals.

To generate your own bibliography of studies dealing with vaginal dryness, simply go to the PubMed Web site at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed>. Type "vaginal dryness" (or synonyms) into the search box, and click "Go." The following is the type of output you can expect from PubMed for vaginal dryness (hyperlinks lead to article summaries):

- **Ask the doctor. I've been taking tamoxifen for several months after completing treatment for breast cancer. My doctor prescribed it primarily to lower my risk of developing cancer in my unaffected breast. As a result of chemotherapy, I underwent menopause abruptly. Tamoxifen has worsened my symptoms, especially hot flashes and vaginal dryness. Other than stopping the tamoxifen, are there ways to deal with the side effects?**

Author(s): Nicholson CR.

Source: Harvard Women's Health Watch. 1999 May; 6(9): 8.

[http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/query.fcgi?cmd=Retrieve&db=pubmed&dopt=Abstract&list\\_uids=10198465](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/query.fcgi?cmd=Retrieve&db=pubmed&dopt=Abstract&list_uids=10198465)

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<sup>3</sup> PubMed was developed by the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI) at the National Library of Medicine (NLM) at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The PubMed database was developed in conjunction with publishers of biomedical literature as a search tool for accessing literature citations and linking to full-text journal articles at Web sites of participating publishers. Publishers that participate in PubMed supply NLM with their citations electronically prior to or at the time of publication.

- **By the way, doctor. After stopping Prempro last year, I developed really uncomfortable vaginal dryness. My doctor has recommended the vaginal estrogen ring. Is it safe?**  
Author(s): Robb-Nicholson C.  
Source: Harvard Women's Health Watch. 2003 February; 10(6): 8.  
[http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/query.fcgi?cmd=Retrieve&db=pubmed&dopt=Abstract&list\\_uids=12604440](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/query.fcgi?cmd=Retrieve&db=pubmed&dopt=Abstract&list_uids=12604440)
- **Management of vaginal dryness.**  
Author(s): Key E, Smith S.  
Source: Nursing Standard : Official Newspaper of the Royal College of Nursing. 1991 April 24-30; 5(31): 24-7.  
[http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/query.fcgi?cmd=Retrieve&db=pubmed&dopt=Abstract&list\\_uids=1903642](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/query.fcgi?cmd=Retrieve&db=pubmed&dopt=Abstract&list_uids=1903642)
- **Vaginal dryness assessment in postmenopausal women using pH test strip.**  
Author(s): Carranza-Lira S, Fragoso-Diaz N, MacGregor-Gooch AL, Garduno-Hernandez MP, Rios-Calderon K, Aparicio H.  
Source: Maturitas. 2003 May 30; 45(1): 55-8.  
[http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/query.fcgi?cmd=Retrieve&db=pubmed&dopt=Abstract&list\\_uids=12753944](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/query.fcgi?cmd=Retrieve&db=pubmed&dopt=Abstract&list_uids=12753944)

## CHAPTER 2. NUTRITION AND VAGINAL DRYNESS

### Overview

In this chapter, we will show you how to find studies dedicated specifically to nutrition and vaginal dryness.

### Finding Nutrition Studies on Vaginal Dryness

The National Institutes of Health's Office of Dietary Supplements (ODS) offers a searchable bibliographic database called the IBIDS (International Bibliographic Information on Dietary Supplements; National Institutes of Health, Building 31, Room 1B29, 31 Center Drive, MSC 2086, Bethesda, Maryland 20892-2086, Tel: 301-435-2920, Fax: 301-480-1845, E-mail: [ods@nih.gov](mailto:ods@nih.gov)). The IBIDS contains over 460,000 scientific citations and summaries about dietary supplements and nutrition as well as references to published international, scientific literature on dietary supplements such as vitamins, minerals, and botanicals.<sup>4</sup> The IBIDS includes references and citations to both human and animal research studies.

As a service of the ODS, access to the IBIDS database is available free of charge at the following Web address: <http://ods.od.nih.gov/databases/ibids.html>. After entering the search area, you have three choices: (1) IBIDS Consumer Database, (2) Full IBIDS Database, or (3) Peer Reviewed Citations Only.

Now that you have selected a database, click on the "Advanced" tab. An advanced search allows you to retrieve up to 100 fully explained references in a comprehensive format. Type "vaginal dryness" (or synonyms) into the search box, and click "Go." To narrow the search, you can also select the "Title" field.

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<sup>4</sup> Adapted from <http://ods.od.nih.gov>. IBIDS is produced by the Office of Dietary Supplements (ODS) at the National Institutes of Health to assist the public, healthcare providers, educators, and researchers in locating credible, scientific information on dietary supplements. IBIDS was developed and will be maintained through an interagency partnership with the Food and Nutrition Information Center of the National Agricultural Library, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The following information is typical of that found when using the “Full IBIDS Database” to search for “vaginal dryness” (or a synonym):

- **By the way, doctor. I'm one year into menopause and really bothered by hot flashes and vaginal dryness. I'd like to take hormone replacement therapy, but I'm worried about increasing my risk of getting breast cancer. My doctor said I can take HRT at a dose longer than what's usually prescribed. What do you think?**  
Source: Robb Nicholson, C Harv-Womens-Health-Watch. 2001 September; 9(1): 7 1070-910X
- **I have found vaginal estrogen cream to be very effective for vaginal dryness but am concerned about the long-term effects of using it. Are there any other treatments that work well for this?**  
Source: Robb Nicholson, C Harv-Womens-Health-Watch. 1998 March; 5(7): 7 1070-910X

## Federal Resources on Nutrition

In addition to the IBIDS, the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) provide many sources of information on general nutrition and health. Recommended resources include:

- healthfinder®, HHS's gateway to health information, including diet and nutrition: <http://www.healthfinder.gov/scripts/SearchContext.asp?topic=238&page=0>
- The United States Department of Agriculture's Web site dedicated to nutrition information: [www.nutrition.gov](http://www.nutrition.gov)
- The Food and Drug Administration's Web site for federal food safety information: [www.foodsafety.gov](http://www.foodsafety.gov)
- The National Action Plan on Overweight and Obesity sponsored by the United States Surgeon General: <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/topics/obesity/>
- The Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition has an Internet site sponsored by the Food and Drug Administration and the Department of Health and Human Services: <http://vm.cfsan.fda.gov/>
- Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion sponsored by the United States Department of Agriculture: <http://www.usda.gov/cnpp/>
- Food and Nutrition Information Center, National Agricultural Library sponsored by the United States Department of Agriculture: <http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/>
- Food and Nutrition Service sponsored by the United States Department of Agriculture: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns/>

## Additional Web Resources

A number of additional Web sites offer encyclopedic information covering food and nutrition. The following is a representative sample:

- AOL: <http://search.aol.com/cat.adp?id=174&layer=&from=subcats>
- Family Village: [http://www.familyvillage.wisc.edu/med\\_nutrition.html](http://www.familyvillage.wisc.edu/med_nutrition.html)
- Google: <http://directory.google.com/Top/Health/Nutrition/>

- Healthnotes: <http://www.healthnotes.com/>
- Open Directory Project: <http://dmoz.org/Health/Nutrition/>
- Yahoo.com: <http://dir.yahoo.com/Health/Nutrition/>
- WebMD®Health: <http://my.webmd.com/nutrition>
- WholeHealthMD.com: <http://www.wholehealthmd.com/reflib/0,1529,00.html>

The following is a specific Web list relating to vaginal dryness; please note that any particular subject below may indicate either a therapeutic use, or a contraindication (potential danger), and does not reflect an official recommendation:

- **Food and Diet**

- **Flaxseeds**

- Source: Healthnotes, Inc.; [www.healthnotes.com](http://www.healthnotes.com)

