

Estrace/Estradiol Cream

Estrogens are hormones produced by the body. Among other things, estrogens help develop and maintain female organs. When your body is in short supply of this hormone, replacing it can ease the uncomfortable changes that occur in the vagina, vulva (female genitals), and urethra (part of the urinary system). Conditions that are treated with vaginal estrogens include a genital skin condition (vulvar atrophy), inflammation of the vagina (atrophic vaginitis), and inflammation of the urethra (urethritis).

The genitourinary syndrome of menopause (GSM) is a new term that describes various menopausal symptoms and signs associated with physical changes of the vulva, vagina, and lower urinary tract. The GSM includes not only genital symptoms (dryness, burning, and irritation) and sexual symptoms (lack of lubrication, discomfort or pain, and impaired function), but also urinary symptoms (urgency, dysuria, and recurrent urinary tract infections).

Estrogens work partly by increasing blood flow and collagen making the vulva and urethra healthy. Using or applying an estrogen relieves or lessens:

- Recurrent urinary tract infections and yeast infections.
- Dryness and soreness in the vagina
- Itching, redness, or soreness of the vulva
- Feeling an urge to urinate more often than is needed or experiencing pain while urinating
- Pain during sexual intercourse that is due to thinned dry skin

When used vaginally or on the skin, most estrogens are not absorbed into the bloodstream and do not cause some effects as when they are taken by mouth. You may feel breast tenderness for the first few weeks, but this will go away as your skin gets healthy and starts absorbing the product. Estrogens used vaginally at very low doses for treating local problems of the genitals and urinary system will not protect against osteoporosis or stop the hot flashes caused by menopause.

Estrogens for vaginal use are available only with your doctor's prescription.

This product is available in the following dosage forms:

- Cream (most common uses as you can apply directly on the vulva and urethra to target the area better than the ring and tablets. Most woman use their fingers to apply and do not use the applicator.
- Tablet- placed in vagina w/ applicator 2x per week.
- Ring- placed in vagina and exchanged every 3 months

FAQ's:

1.) **Is it safe?** Yes, multiple studies have shown there is no high risk of cancer. With a personal history of breast cancer there are studies that show safety in this population. Ask your oncologist to weigh in to make sure they are supportive of your decision. Remember every medication has risk and benefits.

2.) **Do I need to use this medication for life?** Yes, if you don't want symptoms to return.

3.) **What if I miss a dose?** If you miss a dose, use it as soon as you can. If it is almost time for your next dose, use only that dose. Do not use double or extra doses.

4.) **How long does it take for estrogen cream to work?** Vaginal atrophy can be treated with topical estrogen and it can take 6-8 weeks to reach its maximum effect. If you stop using it, the beneficial effects will stop and your symptoms will return.

5.) **What if the medication is too expensive?** We can get a compounding pharmacy (like M&S or Abeldt's) to compound it. Compounding means a pharmacy makes their own medication that may be equally effective as a pharmaceutical company. Insurance may not cover compound cream; the cost is usually about \$50. Estrace cream will last many months so it is not a monthly cost. You can also check out good RX app on smart phones and type in estradiol cream, find the closest and cheapest pharmacy near you and have your current pharmacy transfer the prescription.