

Non-prescription Treatment of Vulvovaginal Atrophy (VVA)

Symptoms of VVA include vaginal dryness, irritation, painful sex (dyspareunia), vaginal discharge and pain. The use of lubricants and vaginal moisturizers may relieve these symptoms.

Non-prescription remedies include

- Vaginal lubricants—for use during sexual activity
- Vaginal moisturizers—used several times weekly for everyday dryness
- Regular sexual activity, with or without a partner

Examples of Vaginal Lubricants	Examples of Vaginal Moisturizers
Water based Containing glycerin Astroglide (liquid, gel) Just Like Me Many flavored lubricants Glycerin-Free Slippery Stuff Maximus Liquid Silk Sliquid H2O Pjur Woman Nude Good Clean Love, PRÉ Yes Water-base Silicone based Astroglide X Pink Pjur Woman Bodyglide ID Millennium Oil based Elégance Women's Lubricants Yes Oil-based Olive oil	For use with an applicator Replens Luvena Applied with your finger Vagisil Feminease

Use of lubricants during intercourse helps to reduce friction that may irritate atrophic skin. There are many products to choose from. Some women find the products themselves to be irritating. You may wish to test a product first by placing on a small patch of soft skin, such as the inner surface of your arm. Many products contain glycerin which is irritating to some women and may be associated with increased yeast infections. Most flavored lubricants have glycerin because of its sweet taste. Many women are sensitive to the preservatives (parabens) in lubricants and there are now many products which don't have these ingredients.

Water based lubricants are absorbable but may need to be reapplied. Many water-based lubricants have a high salt content and this may be irritating. One water-based has been designed with balanced salts (Good Clean Love, PRÉ) and the silicone lubricants are balanced.

The organic water-based products are propylene glycol-free (Slippery Stuff, Good Clean Love, Sliquid H2O, Pjur Woman Bodyglide). The most moisturizing lubricants are Liquid Silk, Maximus and Yes products. Saliva also works well as a lubricant. Avoid lubricants with glycerin if you are prone to yeast infections.

Silicone products are long lasting and work well with severe vaginal dryness. Silicone lubricants are salt-balanced and may be less irritating. Silicone lubricants don't wash off easily with water, but need to be scrubbed off. Silicone lubricants may dissolve some sex toys and should be used with caution.

Oil-based lubricants degrade condoms and should not be used. Petroleum jelly (Vaseline) is not a good lubricant and it will also degrade a condom. Water- and silicone-based lubricants may be safely used with condoms.

Some lubricants are thin, some are thick, and some will have a sweet, bitter or salty taste. Since lubricants are a personal preference you may need to try several types of lubricants until you find one that works for you.

Vaginal moisturizers provide longer lasting relief of vaginal dryness compared to lubricants that are designed to provide brief relief in moments of intimacy. Replens is the best-known moisturizer and the only one studied and approved by the FDA. It is a gel that is applied with an applicator every 3-5 days. Luvena is paraben and glycerin free. Luvena contains prebiotic enzymes but the importance of this has not been tested.

Vagisil moisturizer is applied with your finger to the vaginal opening daily.

Douching is not recommended at any age. Douching means washing the vagina internally with water or another solution. Douching disrupts the healthy bacteria in the vagina and makes you more prone to infection. You can keep your vagina healthy by simply washing the outer genital tissue (vulva) with water during your daily shower or bath and avoid scrubbing the vulvar skin.

If lubricants, moisturizers or sexual activity do not provide relief of your symptoms, talk to your doctor about **low dose vaginal estrogen** as an additional therapy. Vaginal estrogen may be applied as a cream, a vaginal tablet, or a 3-month vaginal ring. Vaginal estrogen therapy is the most effective treatment. It is safe and well tolerated by most women.

For more information: www.menopause.org