

Vaginal Estradiol Cream Use

Estradiol is a bio-identical hormone, the same hormone that is no longer produced by the ovaries after menopause. Vaginal dryness and painful sex can develop due to loss of estrogen. Other symptoms include waking up at night to urinate, urgency and frequency of urination, and increased number of UTI's (bladder infections). Not everyone gets these symptoms and they can range in severity and might not show up until months or years after periods have stopped.

Vaginal estrogen is a safe and effective long-term treatment for these symptoms. If you research vaginal estrogen, or look at the drug company handout, you'll see a black box warning. The FDA mandates that all estrogen products carry this warning. Although traditional hormone therapy may carry certain risks, using vaginal estrogen alone is very safe!

Vaginal estrogen products (creams, tablets, suppositories and rings) contain a very low dose of estrogen. Many studies show they do not increase the risk of conditions listed in that warning. Major medical organizations, including ObGyn societies, are trying to get the FDA to remove the warning for vaginal estrogen because it scares people away from using it.

Vaginal estradiol (generic) cream contains low-dose pure estradiol (estrogen) hormone (0.01%). It is inserted vaginally at bedtime. The usual dose is 1 gram vaginal at night twice a week. There is a higher dose protocol, 1 gram each night for 2 weeks then 2 times per week. That higher dosing can sometimes cause side effects such as breast tenderness or spotting.

This medication is usually introduced vaginally using a plastic applicator. A common dose is 1 gram. This means filling up the applicator about one-fourth (1/4) full. Insert the applicator deep into the vagina so the cream can distribute throughout. Wear a pad during the night since some of the cream may leak out. Some patients place the cream on their finger and introduce it manually. Applying a small amount to the vaginal opening can be helpful as a lubricant and also help treat the tissues in that area.

Steps

1. It's easiest to do this just before going to bed. Wear a liner, some of the cream leaks out.
2. Attach a clean applicator to the medication tube.
3. Squeeze the medicine into the tube until the desired dose is reached, normally 1 gram.
4. Lubrication of the outside of the tube before insertion can help. Use a little cream.
5. Lie down, insert the applicator (medication end first) into the vagina. Insert it a couple inches deep, stop if discomfort, but the further in the better.
6. Gently press the "plunger" which releases the medication, then remove the applicator.
7. Rinse the applicator with warm water so it can be reused – can be done next am. Consider using a tiny brush to clean the inside of the applicator.
8. You can have sex safely after inserting the cream, only trace amounts might transfer to your partner.
9. Here is a 38 second video on the above steps: www.youtube.com/watch?v=-hJL0qZ5r4c

Long term dosing

One gram twice a week for about 6-12 months, when full results are likely to be present. Change to one gram once a week. Long-term use is safe and if you stop using the cream, the beneficial effects will gradually wear off.

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