Vaginal Laser Therapy

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www.menopause.org.au
What is vaginal laser treatment and what is it used for?

Low estrogen after menopause can cause vaginal dryness and inflammation, pain during intercourse and urinary symptoms.

Main points

- Vaginal laser is a new treatment for some menopausal symptoms
- There is insufficient high quality evidence for its safety
- Vaginal estrogen is safe and effective by most women
- Vaginal laser for menopausal symptoms is not approved by regulatory authorities in some countries
What are the risks and benefits of vaginal laser therapy?

Currently in Australia and the USA, the CO2 laser has not been approved for use in treating menopausal symptoms because there has not been enough high-quality research evidence supporting its benefit and safety. In the USA, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has issued a warning about the use of laser therapy for “vaginal rejuvenation”. In addition to CO2 laser, there are other types of lasers and radio frequency devices being used in a similar way and without good evidence.

Some studies have shown that vaginal laser helps to thicken the fragile vaginal lining and increase lubrication, with improvement in vaginal dryness, pain, and urinary symptoms. However, there are potential complications such as scarring, infection, pain and altered sexual sensation. This is a relatively new treatment and so far, there are no good studies of long-term follow-up. In addition, there are concerns that women are being sold an expensive treatment where there is a safer and much cheaper option available.

What other treatments are available?

Vaginal estrogen treatments are safe and effective in most women other than those with breast cancer. They remain the “gold standard” for treatment of vaginal dryness. For some women with breast cancer who are unable to use vaginal estrogen, nonhormonal vaginal moisturizers are available although they may not be as effective.

Where can I go for help?

Your doctor can discuss your concerns and examine you. It is very important to check for other conditions that may be causing your symptoms.