# Keeping the Bloom on Your Rose

Don’t let moisture-starved vaginal tissues ruin sex for you.

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In general, there are many causes of vaginal dryness. “Medication can cause it, as well as sensitivity to birth control pills,” says Hilda Hutcherson, MD, a clinical professor of obstetrics and gynecology at Columbia University in New York City. “But this can also happen to women when they become perimenopausal or menopausal and their estrogen levels go down.”

For many women who suffer from a  dip in their estrogen levels, vaginal dryness can cause itching, burning or pain during intercourse. This is because losing estrogen can thin the vaginal walls and make tissues less elastic and less lubricated.

Also, less lubrication can cause bleeding and tearing of thinned-out vaginal tissues during intercourse. “No one seems to talk about this,” says one 59-year-old woman who is two years postmenopausal. “I was totally unprepared when this happened to me.”

But vaginal dryness is a normal and common problem for many women. Sexual health experts suggest women speak to their doctor if they get any signs of the condition because there are treatments. Therapies include using vaginal lubricants and moisturizers, or low-dose vaginal estrogen therapy in cream, ring or tablet form. Doctors may also suggest hormone replacement therapy (HRT) if a woman is a likely candidate.

Other ways to treat vaginal dryness, according to some experts, are as close as your kitchen and bedroom. Drink more water and include more good oils in your diet, suggests one health practitioner.

Additionally, regular sexual activity or stimulation also helps to keep vaginal tissues from drying out.

But, advises Hutcherson, a woman may need many minutes of foreplay with her partner “to get things going.”

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