

# Genitourinary Syndrome of Menopause: What You Should Know

## What is genitourinary syndrome of menopause?

Genitourinary syndrome of menopause (called GSM for short) happens after your period stops. Your body makes less estrogen hormone, and this makes your vagina and vulva (the outside of the vagina) dry. This can lead to pain with sex, pain or burning of the vulva, and urinary tract infections.

## Who gets it?

About half of women get GSM after menopause.

## How can I tell if I have it?

- It may hurt when you have sex.
- Your vulva or vagina may feel dry, itchy, or painful.
- You may have to go to the bathroom more often.
- It may burn when you pass urine.
- You might have hot flashes, mood swings, or changes in your weight.

## How is it treated?

There are many different treatments for GSM. Talk to your doctor about what is best for you. Your doctor may suggest that you:

- Use vaginal moisturizers.
- Use lubricants when you have sex.
- Keep your vulva clean.
- Don't use fabrics or soaps that irritate your skin.
- Use estrogen cream on the vulva and vagina.

## What can I expect?

There is no cure for GSM. You may need treatment for a long time.

## Where can I get more information?

Your doctor

North American Menopause Society  
<https://menopause.org/for-women>

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This handout is provided to you by your family doctor and the American Academy of Family Physicians. Other health-related information is available from the AAFP online at <https://familydoctor.org>.

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