

Information + Taking Control = Best Outcome



Women's and
Children's Health

Fast Facts Information Sheets for Patients

Urogenital Atrophy

HEALTHCARE

Karger 

Urogenital atrophy

What is urogenital atrophy?

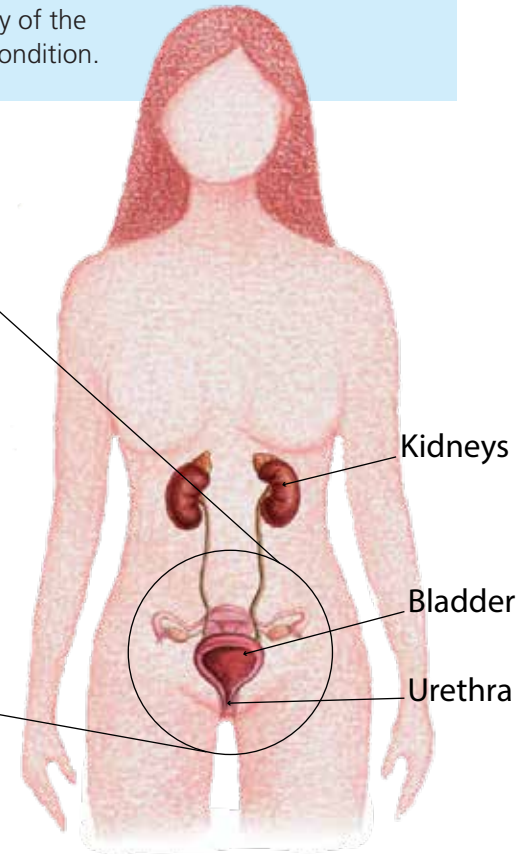
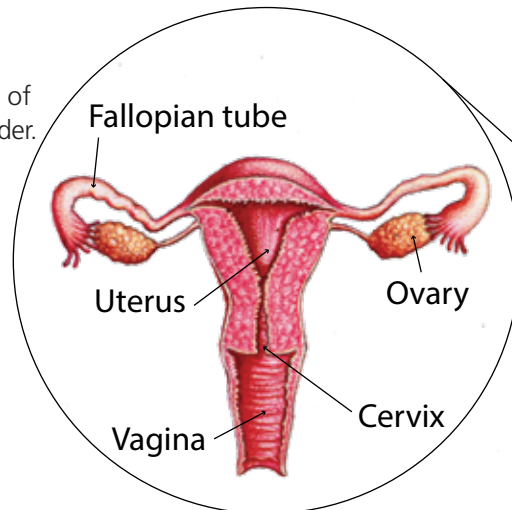
Urogenital atrophy (UGA) is a condition caused by a drop in the level of oestrogen. It can happen around the time of menopause. The symptoms of UGA include a dry vagina and vulva, painful sex and bladder problems. The condition is very common.

Many women mistakenly believe their symptoms are a normal part of getting older so they may not tell their doctor. In fact, a range of treatments are available that can help with many of the symptoms of the condition.

What causes UGA?

When the ovaries stop producing oestrogen it can affect the health of the vulva, vagina, urethra and bladder.

UGA is usually associated with menopause, but low levels of oestrogen can also happen for other reasons. Whatever the reason, if oestrogen levels are low, a woman can experience symptoms of UGA.



What is oestrogen? Oestrogen is a female sex hormone that is mainly produced in the ovaries. The amount of oestrogen the ovaries produce starts falling a few years before a woman's final period and the menopause.

Can UGA affect my bladder?

Bladder symptoms are very common in UGA. They include

- Painful urination
- Frequent urination
- Leaking urine
- Urgent need to urinate
- Painful urination
- Frequent urination
- Leaking urine
- Urgent need to urinate



If bladder issues are not treated, they can lead to a urinary tract infection (UTI) like cystitis.

A UTI will often need to be treated with antibiotics.

What are the most common symptoms of UGA?

Symptoms of UGA vary from woman to woman.

Common symptoms include:

- Vaginal dryness
- Vulval itching and burning
- Pain during sex
- Bleeding after sex.

Painful sex is a very common symptom of UGA. And yet, while it is very common, it is also one of the symptoms that women are less likely to mention to their doctors. This can mean that the symptom is never treated and gets worse with time.

"The worst symptom for me? A dry vagina leading to painful sex. It's like someone is rubbing sandpaper internally"

How can UGA affect my intimate relationships?

Sexual health and wellbeing are very important aspects of your physical and mental health. When it is not diagnosed and not treated, UGA can have a devastating impact on your sex life.

When sex hurts, it is natural to want to avoid it. If you have a partner, they may feel worried about hurting you, which can also make them feel anxious. They may also avoid initiating sex.



How is UGA diagnosed?

At the moment, not every healthcare professional is fully aware of the symptoms and signs of UGA and there is no single, standard test to diagnose it. What this means is that different assessments may be used in the consulting room.

Tests may include:

- **Patient history.** This is when your doctor asks you questions about your symptoms.
- **Pelvic exam.** Signs of UGA are often clearly visible to a healthcare professional. An internal exam is often not needed
- **Vaginal pH.** In UGA, the pH level of the vaginal secretions is likely to be 5.5 or higher. The pH level is a measure of how acid or alkaline something is.
- **Urine dip test** if you have bladder symptoms.

What treatment is available?

A range of treatments are available for UGA, both prescription and non-prescription, hormonal and non-hormonal. Vaginal oestrogens are the best form of treatment. The following table lists some treatments (there are also others) and is intended as general advice.

Symptom	Treatment	Prescription?	What form does it come in?
Dry vagina and painful sex	Vaginal oestrogen	Yes (and in the UK sometimes as a non-prescription product. The pharmacist will advise.)	As pessaries (to insert into the vagina), creams, a gel or a vaginal ring.
	Vaginal moisturisers and lubricants	Not necessary – available in the pharmacy	Creams and gels
Bladder issues	Vaginal oestrogen	Yes (and in the UK sometimes as a non-prescription product a pharmacist can advise.)	As pessaries (to insert into the vagina), creams, a gel or a vaginal ring.
	Pelvic floor physio	Not necessary though possible.	Special exercises for the pelvic floor muscles

More help and information

Daisy Network
daisynetwork.org

Menopause Matters
menopausematters.co.uk

Menopause Support
menopausesupport.co.uk

Menopause Now
menopausenow.com

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Urogenital atrophy

What is urogenital atrophy?

Urogenital atrophy (UGA) is a condition caused by a decrease in oestrogen levels that can happen around the time of menopause. Symptoms of UGA include dry vagina, urinary incontinence and bladder control issues.

Many women mistakenly believe their symptoms are a normal part of getting older so they may not tell their doctor. In fact, a range of treatments are available that can help with many of the symptoms of the condition.

How can UGA affect my intimate relationships?

Sexual health and well-being are very important aspects of your physical and mental health. When it is not optimal, it can affect your quality of life. UGA can have a significant impact on your sex life.

When sex hurts, it is natural to avoid it. If you have a partner, they may feel worried about hurting you, which can also make them feel anxious. They may also avoid satisfying sex.

How is UGA diagnosed?

At the moment, no easy tests are available to fully assess the symptoms and signs of UGA and there is no single, standard test to diagnose it. What this means is that different assessments may be used in the consulting room.

Tests may include:

- **Patient history:** This is when your doctor asks you questions about your symptoms.
- **Physical exam:** Signs of UGA are often clearly visible to a healthcare professional. An internal exam is often not needed.
- **Vaginal pH:** In UGA, the pH level of the vaginal secretions is likely to be 5.2 or higher. The pH level is a measure of how acid or alkaline something is.
- **Urine dip test:** If you have bladder symptoms.

What treatment is available?

A range of treatments are available for UGA, both prescription and non-prescription, hormonal and non-hormonal. Vaginal oestrogens are the first form of treatment. The following table lists some treatments there are also others and it is intended as general advice.

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Dry vagina and painful sex	Vaginal oestrogen	Yes (and in the UK sometimes as a non-prescription product. The pharmacist will advise.)	As pessaries (to insert into the vagina), creams, a gel or a vaginal ring.
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Pubic floor physio	Pubic floor physio	Not necessary though possible	Special exercises for the pelvic floor muscles.

More help and information

Being Network beingnetwork.org

Menopause Matters menopausematters.co.uk

Menopause Support menopausesupport.co.uk

Menopause Now menopausenow.com

What are the most common symptoms of UGA?

Symptoms of UGA vary from woman to woman. Common symptoms include:

- Vaginal dryness
- Vaginal itching and burning
- Pain during sex
- Bleeding after sex.

Painful sex is a very common symptom of UGA. And yet, while it is very common, it is also one of the symptoms that women are less likely to mention to their doctors. This can mean that the symptom is never treated and gets worse with time.

"The worst symptom for me? A dry vagina leading to painful sex. It's the discomfort it robbing satisfaction intensity."

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