



10 TIPS FOR CARING FOR

the

perimenopausal

vagina

**SUPPORTING WOMEN OVER 40
TO TRANSFORM THEIR HEALTH
USING HERBS AND FOOD AS MEDICINE**

(C) Simone Jeffries Naturopath

Understanding your vagina in perimenopause



HEALTHY VAG TIP #1

Get to know your vagina when it's healthy. What does your vagina look like? What does your vag smell like? What is the pattern of your discharge?

Unless you are on a hormonal contraceptive, you should have minimal discharge throughout the month, with white, sticky, fertile mucous at ovulation.

HEALTHY VAG TIP #2

Your vagina contains its own microbiome - mostly bacteria. This bacteria will keep your vagina nice and healthy as long as it's composed mostly of lactobacillus species.

While ever you have estrogen in your body (from puberty to menopause) you should have healthy levels of lactobacillus in your vagina.

Perimenopause can disrupt regular estrogen levels and affect your vaginal microbiome.

HEALTHY VAG TIP #3

In the early stages of perimenopause (roughly from age 42 to 47) it's possible to experience higher levels of estrogen.

Excess estrogen levels can lead to heavier periods and vaginal thrush.

This is a time when you might get stuck in a pattern of only getting relief from the symptoms of thrush on the days when you're experiencing a period.

If this is happening to you, it's important to prioritise hormone balance as well as microbiome balance.

HEALTHY VAG TIP #4

In the later stages of perimenopause, often but not always in your late 40s to early 50s, estrogen levels drop.

You can tell estrogen is lower because your periods will get lighter and further apart. You might notice hot flushes or sweating at night.

Dryness and vaginal atrophy can follow lower estrogen levels, making sex more painful. For some women even standing or sitting can become painful.

So tip 4 is to moisturise and care for your vagina as well as you moisturise and care for the skin on your face and body.

You might like to try my Happy Vag Cream.

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HEALTHY VAG TIP #5

There are a group of bacteria that love to flourish when vaginal estrogen and lactobacillus levels drop.

If your vagina starts to smell a bit funky (fishy, vinegary, or like garbage) then you most likely have some vaginal dysbiosis.

Most commonly dysbiosis takes the form of either bacterial vaginosis (BV); aerobic vaginosis (AV) or Candida (thrush).

Vaginal dysbiosis causes discharge and odour and sometimes itching, burning and pain or discomfort.

The most likely times for disruption to occur is with a new sexual partner or a course of antibiotics.

Other things that can contribute to dysbiosis are stress, menstrual cups, bath bombs, synthetic underwear, poor hygiene during sex and chlorine.

HEALTHY VAG TIP #6

I know it's tempting to think that you can enjoy intercourse without condoms in perimenopause.

You have an IUD? Maybe the new guy you're dating has had a vasectomy? Think again!

Sex in perimenopause can be fraught with problems if you're not aware of the health of your vaginal microbiome.

Always use a condom until he's certified free of sexually transmitted infections. Or for women who have sex with women - please exercise caution!

HEALTHY VAG TIP #7

In the later stages of perimenopause it is not uncommon for urinary tract infections to become more frequent.

If you experience recurrent UTI's I recommend herbal medicine to stop the cycle. Or work with a doctor who will test your bacteria and prescribe adequate antibiotics to completely eradicate the infection.

Unfortunately it's common to see women who have not properly cleared the first UTI and have had to take multiple rounds of antibiotics unsuccessfully.

Keeping your vagina moisturised, supporting your healthy levels of vaginal bacteria and using lubricants during sex can help to stop the infections.

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HEALTHY VAG TIP #8

Talk about your vagina!!!

Don't be shy! It's not a secret - more than 50% of the population has a vagina.

Start a conversation about your vagina with your girlfriends. There's a good chance they'll be really keen to tell you about what's happening with their vag too.

There are many infectious and dermatological problems that can occur when we don't care for our vaginas. If we don't talk about them, no one knows what to look out for.

Talk to your sons and daughters about how to care for vaginas!

Talk to your doctor if you think there are changes that aren't normal for you.

Seek out a naturopath who specialises in this area (like me).

HEALTHY VAG TIP #9

Use a pH balanced lubricant with intercourse!

A pH balanced lubricant won't disrupt your lactobacillus, who are very particular about the environment they prefer - somewhere around a pH of 4.

The brand of lubricant I recommend is called YES! But there are a few brands now that are safe for the vagina.

Always use a lubricant if you experience painful sex.

HEALTHY VAG TIP #10

Vaginal dryness can be caused by other factors - not just dropping estrogen levels.

If you start to have a sensation of dryness, you might benefit from checking any medications you take to see if they dry vaginal tissue. Common culprits are antihistamines and diabetes medications.

Stress, smoking and underlying health conditions are reasons why your vaginal tissue may be feeling sensitive or dry.

See my blog "What to do about a dry vagina" for more information about vaginal dryness

**PLEASE
BOOK AN APPOINTMENT WITH ME
IF YOU NEED SPECIFIC SUPPORT
FOR YOUR VAGINA**

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