

Options for making sex more enjoyable at any age

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Women at any age should be able to enjoy sex. Unfortunately, sexual function and comfort often decreases for women during the menopause transition. A presentation at The North American Menopause Society (NAMS) Annual Meeting in San Diego, October 3-6, will highlight the many nonhormone and also hormone therapy options currently available to help women stay sexually active, even if they suffer from genitourinary syndrome of menopause (GSM).

Vulvovaginal atrophy, which is the result of estrogen deficiency, often results in diminished lubrication, dryness, and pain. As the most common components of GSM, they are responsible for keeping many postmenopausal women from having or enjoying sex.

In her presentation at the NAMS Annual Meeting, Dr. Jan Shifren from Harvard Medical School will discuss the various treatment options—hormone and nonhormone—that have proven to be effective in battling the effects of GSM.

Nonhormone options that provide at least some relief include regular use of long-acting vaginal moisturizers and lubricants to decrease friction. Topical lidocaine can also help decrease the pain of penetration, as can pelvic floor [therapy](#). Newer, more invasive options, such as vaginal laser therapy that stimulates collagen growth, offer some promise, although more research is still needed to confirm long-term effectiveness and lack of adverse side effects.

There are also various approved hormone therapies, including vaginal use of low-dose estrogen therapy and DHEA and oral ospemifene. Testosterone has also proven effective in improving [sexual function](#) in a series of large, randomized, controlled trials, although there are no FDA-approved testosterone products for women and long-term risks are unknown.

"Fortunately for women who have suffered with GSM, including women who have undergone cancer treatments, there are more options than ever before for maintaining a healthy sex life," says Dr. Shifren.

"It is important for [women](#), as well as their healthcare providers, to understand the information because sex shouldn't hurt at any age," says Dr. JoAnn Pinkerton, NAMS executive director."

Provided by The North American Menopause Society

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