

More discussion needed about vulvovaginal health at well woman visits

24 September 2019

Despite the wealth of information now available about menopause, women are still not comfortable in proactively discussing vaginal issues related to menopause with their healthcare providers, who appear equally uncomfortable and unlikely to initiate the conversation. That's according to a new study which will be presented during The North American Menopause Society (NAMS) Annual Meeting in Chicago, September 25-28, 2019.

In this new study involving more than 1,500 postmenopausal women, 45% reported some type of postmenopausal vulvovaginal symptom, such as [vaginal dryness](#), itching, soreness, or odor. Of these symptomatic women, only 39% discussed their symptoms at their well woman visits. When conversations about vulvovaginal health did take place, researchers discovered that it was the patient who more often initiated the discussion than the clinician (59% vs. 22%), with 16% reporting that both started the discussions.

Of the women who entered into a conversation with their [healthcare providers](#), 83% were satisfied or very satisfied with the results of the discussions as they led to helpful recommendations. Of the women who didn't have a conversation, 18% wished they had.

"Nearly half of these [postmenopausal women](#) reported having a vulvovaginal problem, yet a minority discussed their symptoms at a well woman visit," says Dr. Amanda Clark, lead author of the study and an affiliate investigator with the Kaiser Permanente Center for Health Research in Portland, Oregon. "Since the discussions that did occur led to helpful interventions, this suggests a role for greater clinician-initiated screening for genitourinary syndrome of menopause."

"With so many options now available, such as over-the-counter lubricants and moisturizers as well as low dose vaginal hormonal products containing estrogen or DHEA, there is no reason for [women](#)

to continue to suffer in silence," says Dr. Stephanie Faubion, NAMS medical director. "Hopefully studies like this one will open the door to better patient-provider communication at well woman visits."

Provided by The North American Menopause Society

APA citation: More discussion needed about vulvovaginal health at well woman visits (2019, September 24) retrieved 11 July 2022 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2019-09-discussion-vulvovaginal-health-woman.html>

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