

Vulvo-vaginal atrophy (VVA) materials for use with and Electronic Health Record

You can use the below texts any way that is useful for you. Feel free to edit the text in any way that suites you, such as substituting “vaginal atrophy” or “genitourinary syndrome of menopause,” for “vulvovaginal atrophy.”

Typically users will use this to create chunks of text to insert into part of the EHR progress note or the After Visit Summary. One strategy is to give a shorthand name to the block of text for each topic, so it can be inserted with a few keystrokes. For example: the VVA symptoms questions could be titled “qvva”. The Emmi decision aid instructions could be titled “pida” for “patient instruction decision aid,” etc.

VVA symptom questions

These are based on validated symptom questionnaires:

1. Do you have hot flushes or flashes?
2. Do you have difficulty sleeping?
3. Do you have trouble with frequent urination?
4. Do you leak urine sometimes when laughing or coughing?
5. Have you had frequent urinary tract infections?
6. Have you had a change in your sexual desire?
7. Do you have trouble with vaginal dryness during intercourse?
8. Do you have trouble with itching or burning of your vulva?
9. Do you have trouble with pain with intercourse sometimes?
10. Have you been avoiding intimacy with your partner?

Use of Emmi VVA Decision Aid

To access the internet vulvovaginal atrophy decision aid:

- 1) Using a laptop or desktop computer go to: www.goEmmi.com/VVA.
- 2) Be sure to use capital letters for the VVA at the end of the address.
- 3) Go through the program- it takes about 35 minutes if you go straight through.
- 4) Print out your notes from the program.
- 5) Bring your notes to your follow up visit.

Tips and Tricks to Help with Symptoms of Vulvo-vaginal atrophy (VVA)

- 1) **Clean with water:** Avoid using soap, douche, and vaginal perfumes. The best thing to clean your vagina and vulva is warm water all by itself.
- 2) **Exercise:** Regular physical activity improves blood flow throughout your body, including the vulvovaginal area.
- 3) **Wellness:** Eating a healthy diet and avoiding cigarette smoke will keep your blood vessels healthy throughout your body, including the vulvovaginal area.
- 4) **Moisturizers:** Moisturizers specially made for the vulva and vagina can be used to **soothe feelings of dryness at any time.**
- 5) **Lubricants:** Lubricants can be used to **make things less dry and more slippery during sexual intimacy.**
- 6) **Massage:** Massaging the vulvar and vaginal areas improves blood flow and makes the tissue more stretchy and flexible.

Vulva and Vaginal Hygiene

Tips to avoid making vulvo-vaginal atrophy worse:

- 1) Washing your vagina and labia with soap may dry things out more and make vaginal atrophy symptoms worse. Try washing with warm water without any soap. If you absolutely need to use soap, make sure it's a mild soap without scent or color, like Dove or Camay.
2. Do not douche or use vaginal perfumes. These products can change the balance of the vagina and dry out the area, making symptoms worse.

Life Style Changes to Help Vaginal Atrophy

Life style changes can help vaginal atrophy. These may work all by themselves if you only have mild symptoms. They may also help other treatments work better for more severe symptoms.

- 1) Exercise 30-60 minutes, 5-6 days a week to promote healthy blood flow everywhere in your body.
- 2) Eat a healthy diet that includes:
 - Healthy oils such as olive oil, tree nuts and seeds
 - Lean meats and fatty fish
 - At least 5 servings per day of vegetables and fruits
 - Few sweets and processed foods
- 3) Stop smoking. Smoking damages blood vessels and reduces blood flow to the small blood vessels in the vulva and vagina and makes symptoms worse.

Lubricants

Intimate lubricants help prevent dryness during sex.

- 1) You do not need a prescription from your doctor to buy these.
- 2) These should be applied to each partner's body as needed.
- 3) Always test a lubricant on your skin before you use it in your vagina. To test a lubricant, dab a little bit on the inside of your wrist or elbow. The skin is thin in these places and close to the thinness of the skin in your vagina. If your skin looks OK after 24 hours, the product should be safe to use. If it itches, or looks pink or red, try a product with different ingredients.
- 4) Look for lubricants that contain one or more of these ingredients:

- Aloe vera
- Carrageenan (made from sea algae)
- Hydroxyethylcellulose or Cellulose Polymer
- Dimethicone or dimethiconol
- Vitamin E

- 5) Stay away from these ingredients:

- Oil of any kind including olive oil, mineral oil and jojoba oil
- Vaseline/petroleum jelly
- Glycerin
- Menthol or peppermint
- Cinnamon
- Capsaicin
- Beeswax
- Chlorhexidine gluconate
- Products labeled as warming or cooling
- Vaseline/petroleum jelly
- Wild Yam

- 6) For severe dryness, use a sex lubricant that is 100% silicone. These only have Dimethicone and Dimethiconol in them.

- 7) Here are a few lubricants that are OK for many women:

Water-based lubricants	Silicone based lubricants
Astroglide Natural	Astroglide X
Liquid Silk	ONE Move
ONE Oasis	Pjur Eros
Pre-Seed	
Slippery Stuff	

- 8) You can often find the lubricants listed above in your local pharmacy or you can order them from:

A Woman's Touch Sexuality Resource Center at: www.femaniwellness.com

OR

drugstore.com

Moisturizers

1) Smooth the moisturizer on the outside of your vagina any time during the day that you feel dry. You can also insert it into your vagina using a needle-less syringe or dropper, at bedtime, to moisturize your vaginal tissues all night long. Insert 1-3 ml when you go to bed, and sleep on a towel. Most women soak that entire amount up. If you try 3 ml and find some comes out as discharge, try less the next night. **You should use moisturizers whether you are planning on sex or not.**

2) Always test a moisturizer on your skin before you use it in your vagina. To test a moisturizer, dab a little bit on the inside of your wrist or elbow. The skin is thin in these places and close to the thinness of the skin in your vagina. If your skin looks OK after 24 hours, the product should be safe to use. If it itches, or looks pink or red, try a product with different ingredients.

3) Look for moisturizers that contain one or more of these ingredients:

- Aloe Vera
- Vitamin E
- Carrageenan

4) Some moisturizers have ingredients that may cause problems. Stay away from these ingredients:

- Oils including olive oil, mineral, jojoba, and palm kernel
- Glycerin
- Beeswax, and other waxes
- Essential oils

5) Here are a few moisturizers that are OK for many women:

- Hayalo GYN
- Hyalofemme
- Liquid Assets
- Luvena
- Me Again

6) You can also use your moisturizer as a sexual lubricant.

7) You can often find the moisturizers listed above in your local pharmacy or you can order them from:

A Woman's Touch Sexuality Resource Center at: www.femaniwellness.com

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Vulvar Massage

- 1) Rather than applying friction to the skin (rubbing, stroking), the aim here is to press and release.
- 2) The press-and-release massage encourages your skin layers to become more flexible, with better blood flow and thicker, more resilient tissue underneath. The entire massage should take about 5-10 minutes.
- 3) You might want to practice the press-and-release motion on the back of your hand. Just press your fingertips onto the back of your hand; it should feel comfortable but firm. Now lift your fingers off, and watch the paler skin on the back of your hand turn back to its normal color. Remember, do not rub. You should feel pressure, not friction.
- 4) The goal is to press and release every bit of skin and tissue on your vulva, beginning with your outer lips.
- 5) First, apply a quarter-sized dab of lubricant and smooth it lightly around so everything is slick. Then, begin to press and release, using two or three fingertips, working your way around the outer lips of your vulva. It might help to think of a clock face, and work your way from 12:00 around and back to 12:00 again.
- 6) When you are finished massaging your outer lips, massage your inner lips. If you need more lubricant, apply some. Press the inner lips between your thumb and fingertips, with a gentle, squeezing motion. This should not hurt; your goal is just to move the blood out, and allow it to return. Work your way all around the inner lips on both sides, and up to the clitoris. Press and release on the clitoris and clitoral hood, too.
- 7) Next, massage the area around your vaginal opening. Press and release all around the opening, from 12:00 to 12:00 again.
- 8) The last area you should focus on is your perineum—the skin between your vaginal opening and anus.
- 9) The flexibility of the perineum is crucial for comfortable vaginal penetration, so if you're having pain with penetration, be sure to include this part.
- 10) Apply ample lubricant to your thumb and index finger, and gently insert your thumb into your vaginal opening. Press down into the skin of your lower vaginal wall (toward your anus) with your thumb while gently squeezing the tissue of the perineum with your index finger. Concentrate on relaxing the muscles underneath the skin by gently sweeping your lubricated thumb from side to side. You are not trying to stretch the skin, but rather help it become more flexible.
- 11) Do this massage 2-3 times each week.

Vaginal massage or stimulation

- 1) Massage the skin of the vagina 2-3 times each week for 5-10 minutes at a time, using a smooth vibrator used inside the vagina or by engaging in penetrative sex alone or with a partner using fingers, a vibrator, or having sexual intercourse.
- 2) If you use a vibrator for vaginal self-massage, choose one that:
 - Is long enough to reach the whole length of the vagina
 - Has a very smooth surface
 - Has variable vibration options, so you can choose what is most comfortable
 - Has a width that is comfortable to use. Bigger is not better.

Vaginal Estrogen Creams or Ointments

- 1) Test on your skin before you use it in your vagina. Dab a little bit on the inside of your wrist or elbow. The skin is thin in these places and close to the thinness of the skin in your vagina. If your skin looks OK after 24 hours, the product should be safe to use. If it itches, or looks pink or red, call our office about using another product.
- 2) To fill the applicator:
 - Screw the applicator onto the tube.
 - Squeeze the medicine into the applicator slowly until it gets to 0.5 grams.
 - Remove the applicator from the tube. Replace the cap on the tube.
- 3) To insert the applicator deep into your vagina:
 - Relax while lying on your back with your knees bent or stand with one foot on a chair.
 - Hold the full applicator in one hand. Slide the applicator slowly into the vagina.
 - Stop before it becomes uncomfortable.
 - Slowly press the plunger until it stops.
 - Withdraw the applicator. The medicine will be left behind in the vagina.
- 4) Clean the applicator each time after you use it:
 - Pull out the plunger out of the applicator
 - Wash both parts completely in warm, soapy water. Do not use hot or boiling water.
 - Rinse well.
 - After drying the applicator, replace the plunger.
- 5) Insert cream or ointment daily at bedtime for 2 weeks, and then decrease to using twice a week before bed.
- 6) Put it in about 12 hours before having sex. This is so the estrogen doesn't transfer to your partner. It is OK to put it in after sex.
- 7) Vaginal estrogen creams or ointments are not lubricants, so you may also want to use a lubricant for vaginal sex.
- 8) Sometimes cream can be messy. Unfortunately, using pantyliners to help with the mess can trap air and may cause yeast infections. Call our office if you are having these problems. We can offer you tablets or a ring that may be less messy.

Vaginal Tablets

- 1) Use the applicator to place the tablet deep in your vagina once each day for 2 weeks
- 2) Insert the pill about the same time each day
- 3) After 2 weeks, insert the pill 2 days each week spread out through the week, maybe Monday and Thursday. You might want to mark the days you use the pill on your calendar or put a reminder in your smart phone to help you remember.
- 4) Put it in about 12 hours before having sex. This is so the estrogen doesn't transfer to your partner. It is OK to put it in after sex.
- 5) You may also want to use a lubricant for vaginal sex.

Vaginal Ring

- 1) The ring you have in now should be replaced every 3 months.
- 2) Figure out a way to remember when to replace the ring, like marking it on your calendar or putting a reminder in your smart phone.
- 3) You may remove the ring before sex, but you do not have to. Remember to put it back in within 6 hours. Always rinse it off with lukewarm water before you put it back in. Do not wash the ring in hot water or use soap.
- 3) The ring may fall out with sex or when you use the bathroom. Just rinse and replace as above.

Ospnena

- 1) Take one tablet each day by mouth with food.

Possible Side Effects:

Serious, but less common side effects can include stroke, blood clots, and cancer of the lining of the uterus.

Common side effects can include hot flashes, vaginal discharge, muscle spasms and increased sweating.