

Understanding Lactational Hypoestrogenism

Disclaimer:

This information is intended for general educational purposes only and is not a substitute for medical advice. Please consult your healthcare provider for information specific to your personal health situation.

WHAT IS IT?

Lactational hypoestrogenism is a natural hormonal state that occurs during breastfeeding/chestfeeding. While nursing, the body produces higher levels of a hormone called prolactin, which helps with milk production. This increase in prolactin leads to lower levels of estrogen—a hormone that helps maintain the health of vaginal and vulvar tissues.

This decrease in estrogen is temporary, but it can cause some noticeable symptoms during the breastfeeding/chestfeeding period.

COMMON SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS:

- Vaginal dryness
- Burning or itching sensations
- Discomfort or pain during sexual activity (dyspareunia)
- Decreased vaginal lubrication
- Increased sensitivity or irritation of the vulva
- Possible urinary symptoms, such as urgency or discomfort

Not everyone will experience these symptoms, and they may vary in severity. They often improve as feeding frequency decreases or after weaning.

WHAT CAN HELP?

Non-Medical Options:

- **Vaginal moisturizers:** Used regularly (a few times a week), these can help improve vaginal moisture over time.
- **Lubricants:** Used during sexual activity to reduce friction and improve comfort. Look for products labeled as pH-balanced and free of fragrances or irritants.
- **Pelvic floor therapy:** Working with a pelvic health physiotherapist can help address pain and support healthy tissue mobility and muscle function.

Medical Options (Consult Your Healthcare Provider):

- Low-dose vaginal estrogen therapy: These are localized treatments (such as creams, tablets, or rings) that provide estrogen directly to the vaginal tissue with minimal absorption into the bloodstream. They are considered safe for many breastfeeding/chestfeeding individuals but should be discussed with your provider.
- Ongoing assessment: If symptoms persist or worsen, it's important to be evaluated to rule out other causes like infections or skin conditions.

FINAL THOUGHTS:

Lactational hypoestrogenism is a common and treatable condition. Many individuals feel more comfortable and confident once they understand what's happening and have support from their healthcare team. If you have symptoms that are affecting your quality of life, please reach out—help is available.