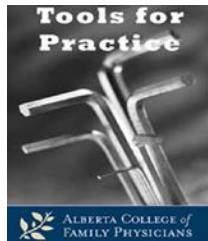


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Verifying the value of vaginal estradiol tablets

Clinical Question: Are vaginal estradiol tablets (Vagifem®) effective for genitourinary syndrome of menopause?



Bottom Line: Vaginal estradiol tablets are likely no better than placebo vaginal gel for reducing “most bothersome symptom scores” (mainly dyspareunia). However, compared to placebo vaginal tablets, they reduce symptoms (example: treatment “success” at 12 months in 86% versus 41% placebo). A non-medicated vaginal gel may be reasonable first-line for dyspareunia.

Evidence:

- Six double-blind, placebo-controlled, randomized, controlled trials (RCTs). Most used 4-point outcome scale (range 0-3, lower better).¹⁻⁴ Statistically significant unless indicated.
- Versus placebo gel:
 - 1 RCT (302 women). Most bothersome symptom score (pain with vaginal penetration in 60%). Final score at 12 weeks (baseline 2.5):
 - 1.1 versus 1.2 (placebo), not statistically different.¹
 - "Meaningful benefit": 80% versus 65% (placebo).
 - No difference: 11 other outcomes.
- Versus placebo vaginal tablet:
 - Vaginal symptoms:
 - Most bothersome symptom score (dyspareunia in 57%). Final score at 12 weeks (baseline ~2.3):
 - 1 RCT (309 women): 1.1 versus 1.4 (placebo).²
 - Composite vaginal symptom score (baseline ~2), final score:
 - At 12 months (1612 women): 0.21 versus 1.15 (placebo).³
 - At 12 weeks (230 women):⁴
 - 25mcg dose 0.56 versus 1.1 (placebo).
 - 10mcg dose not different from placebo.
 - Percent without moderate-severe individual symptoms at 12 weeks (1 RCT, 164 women):⁵
 - Dryness: 85% versus 72% (placebo).
 - Itching/burning: 89% versus 74% (placebo), not statistically different.

- Dyspareunia: 92% versus 76% (placebo).
 - Overall "success" at 12 months (1612 women):³ 86% versus 41% (placebo), number needed to treat=3.
 - Urinary incontinence:
 - Percent without urinary symptoms:
 - At 12 months (1612 women): 84% versus 64% (placebo).³
 - "Change for the better":
 - At 12 weeks (164 women): 63% versus 32% placebo.⁵
 - No difference frequency/nocturia at 12 weeks (110 women).⁶
 - Cancer/endometrial thickening (unopposed estrogen), 2 industry-funded studies:^{7,8}
 - From 386 women with negative baseline investigations, 1 hyperplasia and 1 carcinoma.
 - Similar to background rate.
- Systematic reviews combined different dosage forms and did not include all RCTs.⁹⁻¹²

Context:

- Some studies used 25mcg dose, not available in Canada.³⁻⁶
- Vaginal moisturizer no better than placebo gel.¹
- More women satisfied with tablets than vaginal estrogen cream (85% versus 73%).¹³

Authors:

Adrienne J Lindblad BSP ACPR PharmD, Mark Makowsky BSP PharmD, Raegan Kijewski MD CCFP, Qudsiyah Bhayat MBChC CCFP FCFP

Disclosures:

Authors do not have any conflicts of interest to declare.

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