



# Patient Education Sheet

## Gynecology | Urology Tips

*by Nancy Carteron, MD, FACP, Senior Consultant, Rheumatology Immunology Autoimmune Disease; Volunteer Associate Clinical Professor, University of California San Francisco; Tips based on Urogynecologist, Rita Melkonian, MD, FACOG, Corte Madera CA presentation at ACR 2016 Luncheon Program and Sjögren's Quarterly Article Vol 11(3) 2016.*

Sjögren's is an autoimmune inflammatory disease targeting exocrine glands, including the vestibular glands (vulva). Lymphocytic perivascular infiltration of predominately CD4+ T-helper cells can result in gland destruction and decrease in lubrication by glairy fluid. Vaginal dryness and itching, painful intercourse (dyspareunia) and frequent yeast infections contribute to decrease in QOL, including sexual dysfunction.

### **In addition to vaginal dryness (common), the following occur in Sjögren's:**

- Lichen planus and Lichen sclerosis
- Vaginal yeast infections
- Cervical dysplasia and cancer, especially in setting of HPV (human papilloma virus)
- Interstitial cystitis (~10%) | pelvic pain relieved by voiding; urgency, and frequency
- Endometriosis (4-fold increase) | pelvic pain around menses, excessive bleeding, back pain, painful urination
- Primary ovarian failure (20%) | premature menopause, infertility

### **Treatment Tips**

- Topical estrogen products (vaginal cream, pill, ring) or systemic Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT)
- Topical lubricants for dryness (see SSF Product Directory for a list of vaginal moisturizers)
- PAP or visual inspection (if prior hysterectomy) every 1-2 years; | PAP yearly and colposcopy for high risk patients
- Lichen planus or sclerosis may warrant topical steroids
- Antifungals (topical or oral) for frequent or severe vaginal yeast infections
- Refer to Urogynecologist for interstitial cystitis and pelvic pain symptoms

For more information on Sjögren's, contact the Sjögren's Syndrome Foundation at:  
6707 Democracy Blvd, Suite 325, Bethesda, MD 20817 • 800-475-6473 • [www.sjogrens.org](http://www.sjogrens.org) • [ssf@sjogrens.org](mailto:ssf@sjogrens.org).

Clinicians: Please make multiple copies of this Patient Education Sheet and distribute to your patients.