Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Estradiol (Topical

This information from UpToDate® Lexidrug™ explains what you need to know about this medication, including what it's used for, how to take it, its side effects, and when to call your healthcare provider.

Brand Names: US

Estrace; Estring; Imvexxy Maintenance Pack; Imvexxy Starter Pack; Vagifem; Yuvafem

Brand Names: Canada

Estring; Imvexxy; Vagifem

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat changes in and around the vagina caused by menopause.
- It is used to treat urinary signs caused by change of life.
- It is used to treat vaginal pain during sex caused by changes that happen with menopause.
- It may be given to you for other reasons. Talk with the doctor.

What do I need to tell my doctor BEFORE I take this drug?

- If you are allergic to this drug; any part of this drug; or any other drugs, foods, or substances. Tell your doctor about the allergy and what signs you had.
- If you have had any of these health problems: Bleeding disorder, blood clots, a higher risk of having a blood clot, breast cancer, liver problems or liver tumor, heart attack, stroke, or a tumor where estrogen makes it grow.

- If you have unexplained vaginal bleeding.
- If you are pregnant or may be pregnant. Do not take this drug if you are pregnant.

This is not a list of all drugs or health problems that interact with this drug.

Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all of your drugs (prescription or OTC, natural products, vitamins) and health problems. You must check to make sure that it is safe for you to take this drug with all of your drugs and health problems. Do not start, stop, or change the dose of any drug without checking with your doctor.

What are some things I need to know or do while I take this drug?

All products:

- Tell all of your health care providers that you take this drug. This includes your doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists. This drug may need to be stopped before certain types of surgery as your doctor has told you. If this drug is stopped, your doctor will tell you when to start taking this drug again after your surgery or procedure.
- A study of women taking an oral estrogen alone showed a raised chance of stroke, blood clots, and dementia. Topical estrogen products were not studied. It is not known if the same effects may happen with this drug.
- If you have high blood sugar (diabetes), you will need to watch your blood sugar closely.
- Have your blood work and other lab tests checked as you have been told by your doctor.
- Be sure to have regular breast exams and gynecology check-ups. You will also need to do breast self-exams as you have been told.
- High blood pressure has happened with drugs like this one. Have your blood pressure checked as you have been told by your doctor.
- High triglyceride levels have happened with this drug. Tell your doctor if you

have ever had high triglyceride levels.

- This drug may affect certain lab tests. Tell all of your health care providers and lab workers that you take this drug.
- Use care if you have risks for heart disease. Some of these risks include high blood pressure, high cholesterol, high blood sugar or diabetes, being overweight, or tobacco use. Talk with your doctor about your risks for heart disease.
- If you drink grapefruit juice or eat grapefruit often, talk with your doctor.
- Talk with your doctor if you will need to be still for long periods of time like long trips, bedrest after surgery, or illness. Not moving for long periods may raise your chance of blood clots.
- If you are 65 or older, use this drug with care. You could have more side effects.
- Tell your doctor if you are breast-feeding. You will need to talk about any risks to your baby.

Vaginal ring:

- Tell your doctor if you have trouble getting the ring out. Sometimes, the ring has gotten stuck to the vaginal wall and surgery was needed.

What are some side effects that I need to call my doctor about right away?

WARNING/CAUTION: Even though it may be rare, some people may have very bad and sometimes deadly side effects when taking a drug. Tell your doctor or get medical help right away if you have any of the following signs or symptoms that may be related to a very bad side effect:

All products:

- Signs of an allergic reaction, like rash; hives; itching; red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin with or without fever; wheezing; tightness in the chest or throat; trouble breathing, swallowing, or talking; unusual hoarseness; or

swelling of the mouth, face, lips, tongue, or throat.

- Signs of gallbladder problems like pain in the upper right belly area, right shoulder area, or between the shoulder blades; change in stools; dark urine or yellow skin or eyes; or fever with chills.
- Signs of liver problems like dark urine, tiredness, decreased appetite, upset stomach or stomach pain, light-colored stools, throwing up, or yellow skin or eyes.
- Signs of high blood pressure like very bad headache or dizziness, passing out, or change in eyesight.
- Signs of a pancreas problem (pancreatitis) like very bad stomach pain, very bad back pain, or very bad upset stomach or throwing up.
- Signs of high or low calcium levels like bone pain, confusion, constipation, feeling tired, headache, muscle cramps or spasms, numbness or tingling, seizures, upset stomach and throwing up, or weakness.
- Weakness on 1 side of the body, trouble speaking or thinking, change in balance, drooping on one side of the face, or blurred eyesight.
- Sudden, severe headache or throwing up.
- Pelvic pain or pressure.
- New or worse vaginal irritation.
- Vaginal itching or discharge.
- Vaginal bleeding that is not normal.
- A lump in the breast, breast pain or soreness, or nipple discharge.
- Depression or other mood changes.
- Memory problems or loss.
- Eyesight changes or loss, bulging eyes, or change in how contact lenses feel.
- This drug may cause you to swell or keep fluid in your body. Tell your doctor if you have swelling, weight gain, or trouble breathing.
- Call your doctor right away if you have signs of a blood clot like chest pain or pressure; coughing up blood; shortness of breath; swelling, warmth,

numbness, change of color, or pain in a leg or arm; or trouble speaking or swallowing.

Vaginal ring:

- Vaginal pain or swelling.
- Toxic shock syndrome (TSS) has happened in a few patients using vaginal rings. TSS is rare, but can be deadly. Tell your doctor right away if you have diarrhea, dizziness or light-headedness, passing out, fever, muscle pain, upset stomach, throwing up, or a sunburn-like rash.

What are some other side effects of this drug?

All drugs may cause side effects. However, many people have no side effects or only have minor side effects. Call your doctor or get medical help if any of these side effects or any other side effects bother you or do not go away:

- Headache.
- Hair loss.
- Tender breasts.
- Diarrhea, upset stomach, or throwing up.
- Stomach pain or cramps.
- Bloating.
- Back pain.

These are not all of the side effects that may occur. If you have questions about side effects, call your doctor. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects.

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

You may report side effects to the FDA at 1-800-332-1088. You may also report side effects at https://www.fda.gov/medwatch.

How is this drug best taken?

Use this drug as ordered by your doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

Vaginal cream/tablet:

- Wash your hands before use.
- Put into your vagina using the applicator that came with this drug. Wash the applicator after use.
- Use this drug at the same time of day.
- There may be days when you will not take this drug.

Vaginal ring:

- Put into the vagina and leave in place for 90 days.
- To use, wash your hands and take ring from the pouch.
- Be sure your hands are dry before you touch this drug.
- Press sides of ring at the same time between thumb and index finger and put folded ring into the vagina.
- Perfect placement is not needed for the ring to work. The ring will not hurt.
- If the ring comes out, rinse with lukewarm water and put back in.
- To take out, hook the index finger around the rim or hold rim between index finger and middle finger and pull out.
- Do not throw the vaginal ring in the toilet.
- Wash your hands after use.

Vaginal insert:

- Do not take this drug by mouth. For vaginal use only. Keep out of your mouth, nose, and eyes (may burn).
- Use this drug at the same time of day.
- Put into the vagina as you have been told by your doctor. Be sure you know

how often to do this and what dose to use. If you have questions, talk with your doctor.

- Wash your hands before and after use.

What do I do if I miss a dose?

- Use a missed dose as soon as you think about it.
- If it is close to the time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your normal time.
- Do not use 2 doses at the same time or extra doses.

How do I store and/or throw out this drug?

- Store in the original container at room temperature.
- Protect from heat.
- Keep all drugs in a safe place. Keep all drugs out of the reach of children and pets.
- Throw away unused or expired drugs. Do not flush down a toilet or pour down a drain unless you are told to do so. Check with your pharmacist if you have questions about the best way to throw out drugs. There may be drug take-back programs in your area.

General drug facts

- If your symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your doctor.
- Do not share your drugs with others and do not take anyone else's drugs.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. Check with your pharmacist. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.

- If you think there has been an overdose, call your poison control center or get medical care right away. Be ready to tell or show what was taken, how much, and when it happened.

Consumer Information Use and Disclaimer

This generalized information is a limited summary of diagnosis, treatment, and/or medication information. It is not meant to be comprehensive and should be used as a tool to help the user understand and/or assess potential diagnostic and treatment options. It does NOT include all information about conditions, treatments, medications, side effects, or risks that may apply to a specific patient. It is not intended to be medical advice or a substitute for the medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment of a health care provider based on the health care provider's examination and assessment of a patient's specific and unique circumstances. Patients must speak with a health care provider for complete information about their health, medical questions, and treatment options, including any risks or benefits regarding use of medications. This information does not endorse any treatments or medications as safe, effective, or approved for treating a specific patient. UpToDate, Inc. and its affiliates disclaim any warranty or liability relating to this information or the use thereof. The use of this information is governed by the Terms of Use, available at https://www.wolterskluwer.com/en/know/clinical-effectiveness-terms.

Last Reviewed Date

2026-03-13

Copyright

© 2026 UpToDate, Inc. and its affiliates and/or licensors. All rights reserved.

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

Estradiol (Topical - Last updated on December 12, 2022

All rights owned and reserved by Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center