
ERBIUM LASER INFORMATION SHEET

The Erbium (or Er:Yag) laser is a non-invasive and non-hormonal treatment for minor vaginal relaxation, prolapse of the vaginal wall (s) and urinary incontinence.

WHAT CAUSES VAGINAL RELAXATION?

Relaxation of the vaginal tissues with subsequent prolapse of the vaginal walls and bladder or rectum can be a natural aging phenomenon. Pregnancy and vaginal delivery are major contributing factors. Other factors that may influence the occurrence of relaxation are obesity and lack of appropriate muscular exercises.

It seems logical that women who maintain a healthy life style minimize their risk to develop vaginal prolapse, but our genetic make-up is sometimes such that relaxation is unavoidable.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF VAGINAL RELAXATION?

- Intercourse: sex may be perceived as less satisfying when the vaginal opening has widened as a result of vaginal birth
- Urination: relaxation of the front wall of the vagina can sometimes lead to incontinence with coughing, sneezing, running, jumping and other physical activities. When the base of the bladder is no longer well supported, a feeling of urgency may develop
- Bowel motion: the back wall of the vagina may start bulging during a bowel motion and make it more difficult to evacuate the stool completely
- Prolapse: the walls of the vagina may no longer be well supported and a feeling of something bulging may occur in the vagina. Some women may also experience dragging, heaviness and discomfort.
- Some women perceive the laxity of the vaginal walls as a vague sense of discomfort which increases as the day goes on, especially when they have been on their feet for a long time

HOW DOES THE ERBIUM LASER WORK?

The Erbium laser beam is absorbed into the superficial layers of the vaginal skin and causes an increase in temperature. Heat can sometimes be felt during the treatment, even when using topical anaesthetic.

The energy diffuses further into the tissues and affects the collagen of the soft tissue below the skin. This results in a tightening of the vaginal skin. This effect is 'additive', which means that subsequent treatments will result in additional increments of tightening.

WHAT OTHER TREATMENTS ARE AVAILABLE FOR VAGINAL RELAXATION?

The mainstay of treatment for vaginal relaxation is physiotherapy for proper control of the muscles supporting the vaginal canal. When there is major disruption of the soft tissues below the skin, surgery may be required to repair the 'damage'. In some cases foreign material (mesh) is inserted to strengthen the weakened soft tissues.

The use of topical Oestrogen, especially for urinary urgency, is common although not proven to be greatly effective.

WHAT IS THE ADVANTAGE OF LASER TREATMENT FOR VAGINAL RELAXATION?

Laser treatment is ideal for those women who have vaginal relaxation causing symptoms but not to the extent that they want to submit to a surgical intervention. It is mainly a matter of quality of life. The laser treatment is less effective than surgical intervention, but there are also far less side effects and complications associated with it.

HOW MANY TREATMENTS WILL I NEED?

About six out of ten women will benefit from the Erbium laser treatment. Typically a positive change is perceived after two treatment sessions (four weeks apart). Some women may require three or four sessions. In most women the positive benefits last for up to one year. Follow-up treatments at six to twelve months can be considered.

More information

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