Physical Characteristics of the Genitourinary Syndrome of Menopause (GSM)
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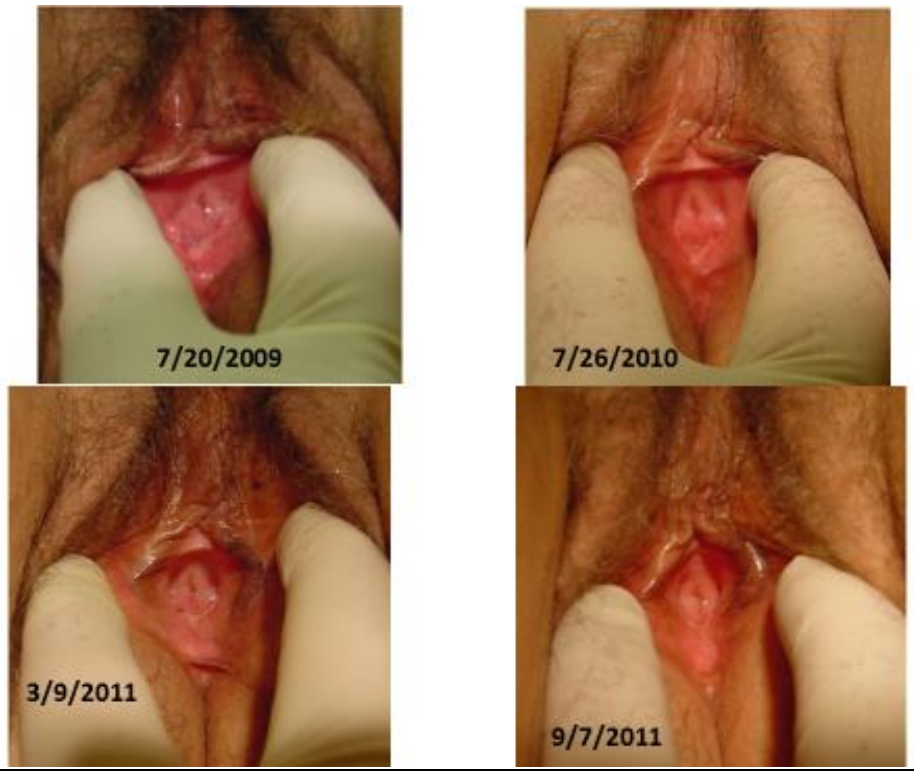
OBJECTIVE: The primary objective of this study was to determine the clinically recognizable physical characteristics of GSM. A secondary objective was to evaluate the correlation between serum estradiol, vaginal pH and the degree of vulvovaginal atrophy.

METHOD: Forty asymptomatic postmenopausal women, ages 55-65, were examined by a single investigator. Twenty of the women were on hormone therapy and twenty were untreated. The morphology of the vestibule (contour), the labia minora, the urethra, the hymeneal carunclae, and the introitus (elasticity) was closely scrutinized. Vaginal pH, serum estradiol and the degree of normalcy versus atrophy ("mild, moderate or severe") was recorded.

RESULTS: Vaginal pH and high-sensitivity serum estradiol were very predictive of the degree of atrophic change: serum estradiol < 20 pg/ml and vaginal pH > 5.5 were associated with identifiable morphologic changes in the vestibule, labia minora, urethra, hymeneal carunclae and introitus (see FIGURES).

CONCLUSION: There are distinct, clinically recognizable morphological changes at the introitus in women with the GSM.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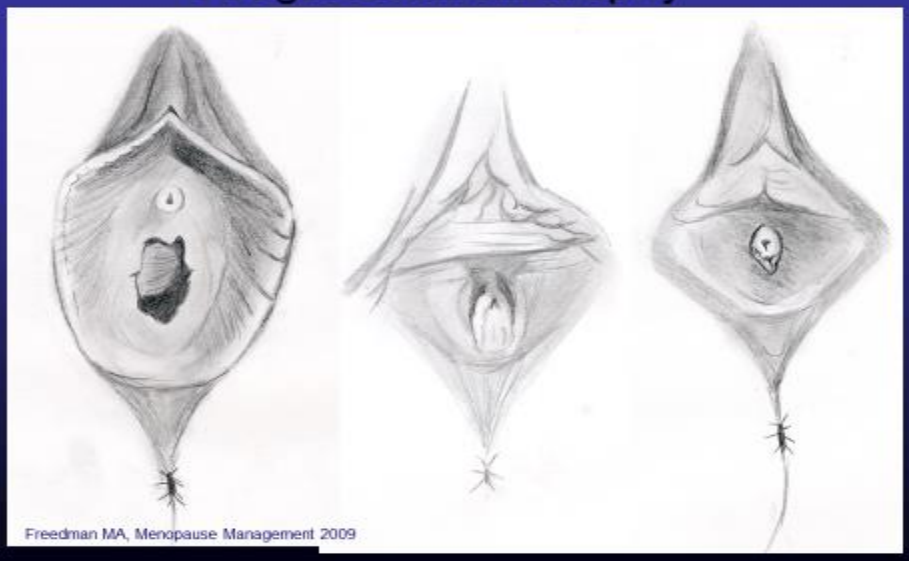
Progression of Atrophy



Freedman MA, Menopause Management 2009