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INTIMATE HYGIENE.

An intimate hygiene carried out in a correct way is useful to give a sensation of pleasant freshness but, above all, it helps to prevent slight diseases that concern the female genital apparatus.

In the past the word hygiene was simply synonymous of cleanliness. Today, with the amplification of our scientific knowledge, the term has acquired an ampler meaning and involving everything that is useful for prevention; actually, if one thinks about hygiene, one makes reference to all those useful practices to keep the genital organs in an excellent state of health and *their functions in good efficiency*. This concept certainly concerns female intimate hygiene, even if, for prevention, the woman must not forget, beside an adequate personal care, to take specific tests such as pap test (gynaecological test) and check-ups.

The female genital apparatus is regulated by a mechanism that varies during the whole life-span and follows different hormonal rhythms: from those rather static of the adolescence and of the menopause to the varying rhythms of the fertile period.

The main point is to try to keep this natural mechanism balanced taking care of it and respecting some hygienic norms.

A correct intimate hygiene helps in fact to avoid less serious diseases, which can provoke uneasiness and negatively interfere with the interpersonal relationships.

MENOPAUSE.

What it is. The menopause corresponds to the period of a woman life during which menstruation, ovulation and the production of hormones such as estrogens stop. Therefore the potentially reproductive period of a woman finishes. It is a normal process of ageing that generally takes place between 45 and 50 years of age, but in some subjects can happen more precociously or in a more advanced age.

Emergence of symptoms. The menopause is pre-announced with a series of menstrual irregularity such as closer cycles and of greater duration, with a sometimes scarce flow, at times spaced out by inter-menstrual blood losses, called spotting, up to the complete cessation of the menstruation.

The consequent lack of estrogens determines a series of symptoms that concern the most varied apparatuses:

The neuroendocrine apparatus with moodiness, anxiety, irritability, decrease of memory and the capacity of concentration, bursts of heat.

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The urogenital apparatus: atrophy of the vaginal mucosa and consequent difficulty to have intercourse, recurrent cystitis, uterine prolapse, urinary incontinence, decrease of desire.

The muscle-skeleton apparatus: osteoporosis, pains to the limbs and the articulations

The cardiovascular apparatus: increase of the number of the heart attacks and coronary heart diseases.

THErapy. A therapy is recommended to improve the quality of life. It consists of the administration of the estrogens that the ovaries are not able to produce anymore. It determines a drastic reduction of the cardiovascular pathologies, of the osteoporosis fractures and of all the symptoms above described linked to the lack of estrogens. The therapy is administered orally or endermic (plasters) and it is advisable to extend it for at least 5 years.

Alarmism concerning an alleged increase of the breast cancer incidence seems to be exaggerated. Recent scientific data esteem the risk of breast cancer after 10-15 years of therapy broadly inferior to the advantage linked to the drastic diminution of cardiovascular and skeletal pathologies.

Nowadays to speak and to know the genital apparatus, both male and female, it is not so difficult anymore. Some years ago this part of the body was neglected because directly connected with sexuality and, therefore, with sin. Beside these motives of social and psychological character there were also difficulties of practical nature, which made personal hygiene extremely difficult, both for lack of bathrooms and for lack of suitable products. All this explains why the genital inflammations were so widespread that they often caused also more serious illnesses. Women still keep putting a lot of questions about the matter, as unfortunately, false beliefs still exist that popular culture has nourished. The question of intimate hygiene is to be coped with with seriousness, going by on correct knowledge of the female genital apparatus. Correct information allows the woman to discredit ancient and wrong beliefs, to keep herself in full health, because no more victim of wrong, scarce or even harmful hygienic practices.

The perfect operation of the female genital apparatus depends on many factors, which sometimes can escape to the control of the woman and they require therefore medical evaluation. Actually there are diseases on which the woman can intervene and make prevention through a correct and accurate intimate hygiene. The normal defences, constituted above all by the presence in vagina of the bacillus of Doderlin that determines a constant acidification of the environment, sometimes are not sufficient to prevent the onset of the inflammatory processes of the vagina and of that portion of uterus, called neck or cervix, that sticks out. These inflammations, beside being rather bothersome, can be contagious and cause problems to the partner; therefore, when they reveal themselves, they require medical intervention.



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The inflammatory processes are generally determined by bacteria, but there are also some of allergic, irritative and traumatic nature. The allergic forms reveal themselves either for intolerance to chemical substances, for the use of synthetic underwear, or for the rubber latex of condoms. Too frequent sexual intercourse, rubbings of narrow garments, particular sports such as horseback riding or cycling, can cause irritations to the genitalia. Inflammations of traumatic origin are more frequent in pediatric age because of rubbings and of small accidents.

A correct hygiene can avoid, in presence of all these causes, the installation of pathogenic germs and more important consequences.

A common cause of inflammation is constituted by the forgetfulness, sometimes of some days, to replace the tampons; forgetting to change regularly the tampons can cause serious troubles, because the blood that stagnates can be polluted by germs coming from the bowel. A good hygienic rule is to practise, obviously after removing the tampon some antiseptic lavages. Vaginitises, therefore, can be of various nature and they often require the intervention of the gynecologist to be perfectly cured, even if it is easier to avoid them with a correct intimate hygiene.