

# Can't Get

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After giving birth to two kids naturally and sailing past 40, FRANCESCA THOMPSON started wondering if her mind and body were playing tricks on her. Her previously healthy libido seemed to be deserting her, affecting not only her sense of self but also her relationship with her husband.

# Satisfaction?

I'd always had what I regarded as a pretty normal libido, but something had definitely changed for the worse. Why had my interest in sex and sexual satisfaction waned so badly? Could it be to do with the vaginal laxity that seemed an inevitable part of giving birth to two children? Was my marriage in jeopardy? Was this condition just an unavoidable part of motherhood and impending middle age? And – most importantly – was there anything at all I could do about it?

With the lyrics of the famous Rolling Stones song in my head, I went along for a consultation with Dr Sylvia Ramirez from **Cutis Medical Laser Clinic**, who offers a ground-breaking medical procedure called **Viveve** that is designed to fix vaginal laxity. Here's what she told me.

## What is vaginal laxity?

Not unlike facial laxity, vaginal laxity is caused by a decline in the tissue collagen of the skin. A natural part of the ageing process, it is further compounded by the unavoidable stretching of the vagina during natural childbirth. The common result of this stretching and looseness is a loss of friction during sexual intercourse, which can lead to the loss of sexual sensation and pleasure – both for the man and for the woman.

## Why have I not heard of it until recently?

Even if women are aware of vaginal laxity, the chances of them feeling comfortable enough to discuss it with a friend, let alone a medical professional, are relatively slim. Women are embarrassed

about it, so it's just not something that comes up in conversation. So the majority of women, whether or not they know about the condition, simply live with it and its damaging consequences – relationship issues, a loss of self-confidence and a growing unhappiness.

It's high time women did start talking about the personal and social ramifications of vaginal laxity, if not to their sisters, mothers and friends, then at least to their medical service providers. There is certainly plenty of interest in the subject! If a production called *The Vagina Monologues* could sell out twice in Singapore, it is clear that there's a lot of scope for more open discussion about vaginal laxity as a serious issue.



- In US surveys, half of all women expressed concern about laxity, yet 83 percent of physicians say that it is not discussed during medical appointments.
- Vaginal laxity is the most-noted physical change after a vaginal delivery reported by obstetricians and gynaecologists in the US.



#### How does Viveve work?

Developed from the radiofrequency (RF) technology used in the Thermage skin-tightening facial treatment, Viveve is a one-off, painless procedure. During the treatment, low-level RF energy is directed to the tissue located at the immediate opening to the vagina. This energy stimulates the growth of the collagen cushion and the tightening of the vaginal opening. It is recommended for women aged up to 55 who have had at least one vaginal delivery.

#### What happens during the procedure?

Plan on scheduling around one hour of your time at Cutis; the procedure itself takes around 30 minutes. No anaesthesia or prior preparation is necessary. It is as simple as removing your underwear, cleaning the vaginal area thoroughly and donning a gown.

Once you're seated in a big comfortable chair, a towel is placed over your lap. A treatment tip, about the size of a thumb, is guided carefully into the opening of the vagina. This treatment tip emits a warm pulse of energy, following by a cooling sensation; and the alternate heating and cooling continues as the tip is rotated around the vaginal opening.

We find that having a relaxed conversation is a pleasant distraction from the procedure, helping patients feel at ease despite the intimacy of the situation.

#### What's the effect, and how much does the treatment cost?

It takes up to a month for the treatment impact to be noticeable, and several months to achieve the full tightening effect. Improved friction translates to greater sexual sensation, with the flow-on effect being more enjoyment of sex and a better relationship. It's a one-off treatment that costs from \$4,200 upwards.

#### Any downtime?

Avoid using tampons and sexual intercourse for the first two days after treatment, during which the area may feel tender. **■**

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