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## Mona Lisa Touch: The Laser That Could Save Women's Sex Lives

By stimulating collagen production inside the vagina, a newly FDA-approved laser could help millions of women overcome painful intercourse.

Laser treatment for the vagina might sound like torture, but for many women the MonaLisa Touch—the first intravaginal laser treatment approved by the Food and Drug Administration—could prove to be life changing.

The Mona Lisa Touch is designed to treat vaginal atrophy, a condition often precipitated by menopause in which the walls of the vagina thin and dry out, rendering intercourse painful and often interfering with urinary function as well. The North American Menopause Society (NAMS) estimates that anywhere between 20 to 45 percent of middle-aged and elderly women experience symptoms associated with vaginal atrophy, constituting a potential market of millions of women. But despite the overwhelming number of women who suffer from symptoms of vaginal atrophy, NAMS notes that “only a minority seek help or are offered help by their providers.”

The Mona Lisa Touch counteracts vaginal atrophy with a small laser that stimulates collagen production inside the vagina, restoring the vaginal mucosa and rehydrating the vaginal walls. As is the case with a standard laser treatment at a dermatologist, this form of intravaginal laser treatment does not require anesthesia and side effects are minimal, typically including some redness or swelling that lasts one or two days. Prior to its U.S. debut, the laser was built and tested in Italy, where it has been posting positive results in initial clinical studies.

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For many women who suffer from vaginal atrophy, the introduction of the MonaLisa Touch into the U.S. market will mark the first time they have access to safe medical technology that can alleviate their symptoms. In the past, treatment options for vaginal atrophy have typically consisted of hormone therapies that counteract symptoms by increasing estrogen levels, the same sorts of treatments used to manage most menopausal symptoms. But women who have an estrogen contraindication—including women with breast cancer, a history of stroke, or certain forms of heart disease—often cannot undergo any form of estrogen therapy. Because intravaginal laser treatment directly targets the symptoms of vaginal atrophy instead of altering hormone levels, technology like the MonaLisa Touch will be a viable treatment option for these women going forward.

If it seems too good to be true, there is one potential problem facing the Mona Lisa Touch: Because the technology is so new, insurers have not yet announced whether or not they will cover intravaginal laser treatments. So far, women who have undergone treatment at The Christ Hospital have had to pay out of pocket for the procedure. But given the fact that 75 percent of women who suffer from vaginal atrophy experience negative consequences in their sex life, it would seem hypocritical for insurers to continue to deny coverage while also paying for similar treatments that rehabilitate the sex lives of men.

[www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/12/03/mona-lisa-touch-the-laser-that-could-save-women-s-sex-lives.html](http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/12/03/mona-lisa-touch-the-laser-that-could-save-women-s-sex-lives.html)