Non-invasive vaginal rejuvenation is more of a movement than a trend—which means that it’s here to stay. In 2014, there was close to a 50 percent jump in the number of labiaplasty procedures performed compared to 2013, according to the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery.

For years, surgery and/or hormone replacement therapy (HRT) were the only options for women who were concerned with the physical and functional effects of aging and childbirth on their genital areas, including laxity, incontinence, dryness, and/or issues with sexual gratification.

Now there is an influx of energy-based devices for vaginal rejuvenation with none of the downtime associated with surgery and none of the risks seen with HRT.

Still, it’s not always easy to talk about, let alone market, these procedures to patients.

“This does not lend itself to traditional external marketing,” says Grant Stevens, MD, founder and Medical Director of Marina Plastic Surgery in Marina Del Rey, CA.

Clever, subtle, and compelling marketing can help open the lines of communication. These include:

1. **TELL THEM ABOUT IT**
   “We send out very targeted newsletters to our list,” says Red Alinsod, MD, a gynecologist and urogynecologic surgeon in Laguna Beach, CA. He chairs the Thermi Women’s Health Advisory Clinical Board and is the founder of the first ThermiVa Center for Physician Education.

   Dr. Alinsod invented, designed, and developed ThermiVa.

   “When we first got ThermiVa, we sent a newsletter with general details and links to deeper details on our website,” he says. “You have to build that page with information on your website for prospective patients who click through your newsletters.”

2. **TEST THE WATERS**
   “We actually just put it on our quarterly newsletter with a featured article to introduce it to our own patient database,” says Sabrina Guillen Fabi, MD, a dermatologist in San Diego. “This is where we start classically to see if it ends up being a hit with our existing patients before we start to market it to the masses beyond our database.”

3. **SPARK CURIOSITY**
   Brochures displayed in the waiting room can also serve as an entryway to a conversation about vaginal rejuvenation. Some savvy practitioners also promote non-invasive vaginal rejuvenation procedures as part of their custom on-hold messaging.

   “My idea was to come up with pins that our staff wears that say ‘Ask me about ThermiVa,” says Dr. Fabi. “This is a great conversation starter.”

4. **UPDATE YOUR INTAKE FORMS**
   “Patients come in and fill out paperwork on their medical history and current concerns and now we ask specific questions in the skin section, such as whether they have a feeling of looseness or lack of sensation in the genital area,” Dr. Alinsod says. “If they check these boxes, it starts the conversation. This is not a gynecologic issue, it’s a skin issue. You have to think of the vaginal area as skin and change the conversation.”

5. **USE STATISTICS**
   No one talks about vaginal laxity, vaginal dryness, or incon-
tinance, so they don’t know just how prevalent these issues are. “We start by citing a statistic of interest that will make women feel less alone,” says Dr. Fabi. For example, did you know that 15 million adult women experience stress incontinence or did you know that up to 50 percent of women experience dyspareunia? Dr. Fabi then tells women that nonsurgical options do exist and can help treat these issues.

6. START THE CONVERSATION

Word-of-mouth plays a big role. “If a patient is interested or has questions, I will have that patient talk to another patient,” Dr. Stevens says.

“Telling existing patients that ‘as a plastic surgeon, I try to stay on top of new trends, and there are a lot of neat things for women available today,’” says Steven M. Gitt, MD, FACS, a plastic surgeon in Phoenix, and a clinical assistant professor at University of Arizona College of Medicine in Phoenix. This patient may not have the need for such procedures, but chances are they have a sister, friend, or colleague who does. Dr. Gitt is a spokesperson for Alma Lasers, the manufacturer of Femilift.

It’s essential to set the right tone for these conversations—word choice and body language are important when discussing these intimate procedures with patients, explains Dr. Gitt. “I use very dignified and indirect terms such as feminine rejuvenation,” he says. “I am also seated in a stool that is lower than the patient when we have this discussion.”

Dr. Gitt, who frequently performs genital surgeries, is comfortable discussing these treatments with female patients, but keeps his patients’ comfort level in mind as well.

“If someone is uncomfortable, I can bring a female nurse practitioner in,” he says. When new patients express interest, Dr. Gitt will start discussing the technology boom in this area. “I will say something like ‘Previously, estrogen creams or vaginal plastic surgery with recovery were all that we could offer, but now we have numerous energy-based devices to treat these issues without downtime and risks.’”

“The American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists does not have an official position on non- or minimally invasive vaginal rejuvenation techniques at this time,” according to a spokesperson. They do not support surgical rejuvenation procedures that are not medically indicated, and those where the safety and effectiveness have not been documented.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand Name</th>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Technology</th>
<th>Website</th>
<th>FDA 510(k) Clearances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Viveve</td>
<td>Vivive Medical</td>
<td>Radiofrequency (RF) energy</td>
<td><a href="http://www.viveve.com/">www.viveve.com/</a></td>
<td>Not yet available in the US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ThermiVa</td>
<td>Therni Aesthetics</td>
<td>RF energy</td>
<td><a href="http://www.thermiva.org">www.thermiva.org</a></td>
<td>Dermatological and general surgical applications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>diVa</td>
<td>Sciton</td>
<td>Hybrid Fractional Vaginal Laser Therapy</td>
<td><a href="http://www.sciton.com/diva/">www.sciton.com/diva/</a></td>
<td>FDA cleared for the ablation and coagulation of soft tissue</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

THE CURRENT DEVICE LANDSCAPE
7. SKIP THE SEX

“The most effective way to start the conversation is pulling the sex out of it,” Dr. Stevens says. “The urinary incontinence piece to this is gigantic. Most women don’t want to discuss sexual problems, but when you ask if they leak when they sneeze or laugh, they will open up. Almost all women experience this to some degree—not just premenopausal women.” This segues nicely into a discussion about new and improved treatment options.

Dr. Alinsod agrees: “Radiofrequency treatments will become the mainstay for overactive bladder, stress incontinence, atrophic vaginitis, and orgasmic dysfunction,” he says. “I haven’t prescribed an overactive bladder drug in a year because of how well ThermiVa works.”

8. DEFINE AND REFINE YOUR SEO STRATEGY

Search engine optimization (SEO) play a role in marketing these procedures, says David Evans, PhD, MBA, the Chief Executive Officer of Ceatus Media Group in San Diego. Consider building out procedure-specific websites, he says. “Focus on local search, which includes a geographic modifier such as vaginal rejuvenation Los Angeles,” he says. “For now, vaginal rejuvenation is much less competitive than the traditionally thought of plastic surgery procedures such as breast augmentation, rhinoplasty, or liposuction, and it is relatively easy to generate considerable practice revenue from the online strategy focused on this procedure.”

Tread carefully with before-and-after photos, says Dr. Alinsod. “We have the before-and-after photos available to evaluate the results of treatments, but we give a warning of the graphic nature of these medical photos.”

“5 million adult women experience stress incontinence. Up to 50 percent of women experience dyspareunia.”