

How to use a Vaginal Dilator

**For patients who have finished pelvic
radiation treatment**

This booklet will give you information about:

- What a vaginal dilator is
- Reasons to use a vaginal dilator
- Where you can buy a vaginal dilator
- When you should use a vaginal dilator
- How to use a vaginal dilator
- When to contact your health care team
- How to contact your health care team

Most of the information in this booklet is for people who have finished pelvic radiation treatment. The information may not be right for people who have had vaginal reconstruction surgery (a new vagina was created).

Please talk to your health care team about how to use a dilator.

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Your health care team will go over this booklet with you.

Call your health care team right away if:

- You have a fever of 38.3°C (100.9°F) or higher.
- You have severe pain in your vagina and/or abdomen (belly area).
- Your vagina is itchy.
- You have discharge (fluid leaking) from your vagina that has a strong odor (smell).
- You cannot put the dilator in your vagina at all.
- You have bleeding from the vagina that is heavier than a light menstrual period and need to wear a pad.



Go to your nearest emergency room if:

- **You need to change a saturated pad every 1 to 2 hours because you are bleeding from the vagina.**

Important Phone Numbers

On weekdays (Monday to Friday)

9:00 AM – 4:30 PM

- Please call the Odette Cancer Centre
Phone number: 416-480-5000

**After hours on weekdays 4:30 PM – 8:30 AM
and on weekends and statutory holidays
(24 hours a day)**

- Please call the After-Hours Phone Line
Phone number: 1-877-681-3057



Look for the  symbol as you review this booklet. These tips may help answer some questions you have.

What is a vaginal dilator?

A vaginal dilator is a firm tube with a round end. It is made out of plastic, rubber or silicone. Vaginal dilators can be solid or hollow and come in many sizes. A vaginal dilator is placed inside the vagina using water soluble lubricant (also known as “lube”) to help open the vagina.



Why should I use a vaginal dilator?

Cancer treatments can cause changes to your vagina.

Surgery and radiation may cause your vaginal opening to shorten or narrow. The tissue in your vagina may also become thin. You may have lower levels estrogen if you had chemotherapy, surgery or radiation. This can make your vaginal tissue thin, dry and less elastic (stretchy). All of these changes may cause discomfort in your vagina.

Using a vaginal dilator can help to:

- Stop scar tissue from forming. If your vagina has become narrow and you have scar tissue, a vaginal dilator can help break down the scar tissue. This will also help to open the vagina.
- Increase blood flow in your vagina.
- Heal the top of the vagina.
- Keep the vagina open, which will help you have a vaginal (pelvic) exam without too much discomfort.
- Make sexual activity and intercourse (sex) more enjoyable and less painful. Try to talk to your partner(s) about the changes you have from your treatment and what that might mean for sexual activity and intercourse (sex).

Please talk to your health care team if you have any questions or concerns about using a vaginal dilator. We are here to help you.

Where can I buy a vaginal dilator?

Your health care team will let you know about the types of dilators you can buy. They will let you know what size might be right for you.

To use the dilator you will need water soluble (dissolves in water) or water-based lubricant (lube) such as Muko or K-Y Jelly®. Try to buy your vaginal dilator and lubricant (lube) before you finish your radiation treatment.

Do not use Vaseline or other oil-based products as lubricant (lube). These products are not water soluble (do not dissolve in water) or water-based and may cause an infection and/or ruin silicone dilators.



You can buy a vaginal dilator or dilator kit (more than one) and water soluble (dissolves in water) or water-based lubricant (lube) online. Try searching these words:

- Vaginal exerciser
- Vaginal dilators
- Silk
- Tantus
- Vaginal lubricant or vaginal lube

You can also buy a vaginal dilator and lubricant (lube) from places such as:

Odette Cancer Centre Pharmacy

Telephone: 416-480-4671

Website: sunnybrook.ca/pharmacy

Location: T-wing, 1st floor

Good For Her

Telephone: 416-588-0900 (for home delivery)

Website: goodforher.com

Vaginismus/Hope&Her

Telephone: 619-449-1200

Website: vaginismus.com

Email: help@hopeandher.com

Come as You Are

Telephone: 416-504-7934

Website: comeasyouare.com

Email: info@comeasyouare.com

Lovecraft

Telephone: 905-276-5772 (for home delivery)

Website: lovecraftsexshop.com

Email: info@lovecraftsexshop.com

Below you will find pictures of some dilators that you can buy and how much they cost. Prices may change over time.

Fuze Silicone Dilator

\$18.00 - \$54.00 per piece
(price depends on the size)



Vaginismus Dilator Set

\$44.95 per set



Tantus Silk

\$35.00 - \$65.00 per piece
(price depends on the size)



Berman Dilator Set

\$50.00 per set



Duo Silicone Dilator

\$23.00 - \$29.00 per piece
(price depends on the size)





Please let your health care team know if you have private health insurance.

Some health insurance providers may cover the cost of vaginal dilators. Your health care team can write a prescription for a dilator or a letter for you to give to your health insurance provider.

If you do not have the money to buy a dilator and/or you do not have private health insurance, please let your health care team know. We may be able to help you.

When should I use a vaginal dilator?

You can start using your vaginal dilator 2 weeks after your radiation treatment is finished.

For the first 6 months, try to use the dilator 3 times a week. Hold the dilator in place for 1 to 2 minutes each time you use it.

After 6 months, try to use the dilator at least once a week. Hold the dilator in place for 1 to 2 minutes each time you use it.

After one year, try to use the dilator once a month. If you find it hard to insert the dilator, you can use it more than once a month.

You do not need to use the dilator on the day(s) you have sexual intercourse (sex). You can have sexual intercourse (sex) 2 weeks after your internal radiation ends. It is normal to have some spotting (bleeding) from your vagina after you have sexual intercourse (sex).

Contact your health care team if you feel pain or have bleeding from the vagina that is heavier than a light menstrual period and you need to wear a pad.



If you are not having sexual intercourse (sex) or any other penetration into the vagina at least 2 to 3 times a week, use the dilator. Keeping the vagina open is important so that you can have a vaginal (pelvic) exam without too much discomfort.

How do I use a vaginal dilator?

To use the dilator, please follow the steps below.

Get ready to use the dilator:

1. Find a quiet time of the day when you are alone and can relax.
2. Get your dilator or dilator kit. If you have a dilator kit, start with the smallest dilator.
3. Wash your hands with soap and water.

4. Wash the dilator with warm water and unscented (no smell) soap.



5. Put the water soluble or water-based lubricant (lube) on the dilator. Make sure you cover the areas that will be inside your vagina (**size of a quarter or more if needed**).



Do not use Vaseline or other oil-based products as lubricant (lube). These products are not water soluble (do not dissolve in water) or water-based and may cause an infection and/or ruin silicone dilators.



You can put some lubricant (lube) on the opening of your vagina. This may make it easier to insert the dilator.

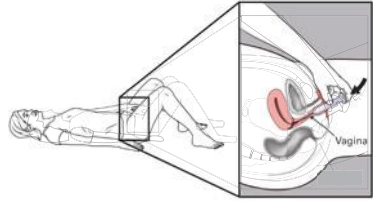
6. Lie on your back. Bend your knees and spread your legs about shoulder-width apart. Relax.



Insert the dilator:

7. With one hand, spread your labia (the folds of skin at the opening of your vagina).

8. Take a deep breath. Slowly blow out air through your nose or mouth and at the same time, gently slide the dilator into your vagina as far as it will go with your other hand. Blowing out air will help relax the muscles around the opening of your vagina and make it easier to insert the dilator.



9. Keep the dilator in place. After a few seconds and if you don't feel too much discomfort, take a deep breath and as you blow out, gently push the dilator further into your vagina. Do this until you feel it is in as far as it can go.
10. If you do not have any pain, hold the dilator in place until you feel it is in as far as it can go. **If you have pain, gently slide the dilator out of your vagina and try again the next day.**



If you find it hard to hold the dilator in place, roll up a towel and put it against the dilator. Close your legs. This will help to hold the dilator in place.

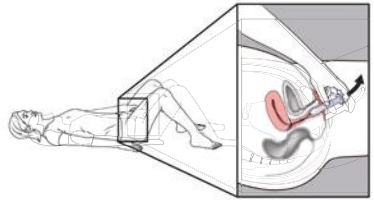
You can also buy a dilator with a handle (such as the Vaginismus Vaginal Dilator).

Move the dilator around:

11. If you do not have pain, keep a bit of pressure on the dilator so that it pushes to the very top of your vagina.
12. Once the dilator is in as far as it can go, try to gently wiggle it side to side and up and down. This will help to stretch and open the vagina.

Remove the dilator:

13. Gently slide the dilator out of your vagina. It is normal to have some spotting (bleeding) from your vagina after you use the dilator.



Clean up:

14. Wash the dilator with warm unscented (no smell) soap and water. This will help to remove any lubricant (lube). Rinse it well. Let it air dry and store it in a clean and dry place.
15. Wash your hands.



If the dilator goes in easily and does not cause you any pain, you can use a bigger dilator next time.

When should I contact my health care team?

Call your health care team right away if:

- You have a fever of 38.3°C (100.9°F) or higher.
- You have severe pain in your vagina and/or abdomen (belly area).
- Your vagina is itchy.
- You have discharge (fluid leaking) from your vagina that has a strong odor (smell).
- You cannot put the dilator in your vagina at all.
- You have bleeding from the vagina that is heavier than a light menstrual period and need to wear a pad.

Go to your nearest emergency room if:

- **You need to change a saturated pad every 1 to 2 hours because you are bleeding from the vagina.**



How can I contact my health care team?

If you have questions or concerns about using a vaginal dilator, please contact your health care team:

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PR 50047 (2021/11/17)



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