

Vaginal dilator FAQs

It has been recommended that you try vaginal dilators, cylinders of graduated sizes to keep the vagina open and healthy. Dilators are a tool for keeping vaginal tissues elastic, comfortable, and ready for pleasurable sex. There are many skin disorders and disorders of the vaginal canal that can be improved with vaginal dilation therapy.

How do dilators work?

Dilators, which come in a range of sizes starting as small as a half-inch in diameter, are typically provided as a set, along with instructions for exercises. Starting with the smallest dilator, you'll perform those exercises regularly; when the exercises are comfortable with that size dilator, you'll move on to the next larger size. The dilators and exercises gradually, gently, and comfortably stretch the vaginal opening and depth until you can comfortably accept sexual penetration.

Where can I buy these?

Vaginal dilators can be discreetly purchased on MiddlesexMD.com. The site offers advice and products to help you maintain your sexuality for life. They can also be purchased on amazon.com and milli.com.

Which type should I get and what sizes?

There are two types silicone and plastic, plastic being the least expensive. You will want to purchase a set that starts out small enough to be extremely comfortable and ends up at your partner's size. There are some that come in 5 or 6 to a set, and there are others that can be purchased separately. It is important to have a hypoallergenic lubricant to use with your dilators. Use water-based lubricant if you use silicone dilators, so the silicone does not weaken. Some women also purchase a vibrator that can be inserted at times. It can help your brain equate something in the vagina with a pleasurable experience but it is not necessary for the dilator use to be successful.

How do I use these?

Firstly, be in a comfortable environment where you can relax. Make it a time to “multitask” with relaxation as a part of your dilation time! Bring a beverage into the room with you if you want it during the session. For many women having something in the vagina is associated with discomfort. You are retraining your brain and body to trust that it can heal. Practice mindful breathing. A full body scan is helpful where you start at your head and work your way

Vaginal dilator FAQs

down your body noticing tension and then releasing that tension. Headspace or other mindfulness apps can help guide you as well. Maintaining a steady breathing pattern by inhaling through the nose and out through the mouth helps to relax the pelvic floor muscles to allow for optimal results. This pattern aids in reducing discomfort during a vaginal dilation. Distraction is your friend: read a book, listen to an engaging podcast, talk on the phone to a friend after the dilator is placed and you are relaxing.

Patients who dilated between 15-20 min per session reported the greatest reduction in anxiety and pain. During the vaginal training session, it is important to keep actual physical pain to a minimum. Put a grape-sized lube on the dilator and insert it with gentle and even pressure. You may want to be on your side or on your back with your knees comfortably bent. If the use of a vaginal dilator becomes painful, take a break for two minutes and try again, or go down a dilator size until your body is ready to progress to the next size. Towards the end of the session move the dilator around a bit but only if you feel comfortable and it doesn't cause stress. Press with the dilator on the upper part of the vagina, then on the sidewalls, and then on the bottom. This gives a little extra pressure and helps with the dilation but also reassures your brain that there is nothing to fear. Try doing a Kegel and contracting the muscles of the vagina to notice that there is no pain associated. There is no "right" time to progress to the next size other than the one you choose. Be patient with yourself-remember this discomfort did not occur overnight and with some time and attention, it can get much better.

When am I ready for vaginal sex?

Because patients use dilators for many different reasons, there is no one time that we know a patient is ready for sex. Talk to your physician about your particular situation. Often patients who were encouraged to use their dilators before sex had a decrease in pain and anxiety. After you are having sex without pain, you may find it helpful to continue to use the dilator a few times a week to keep the vagina open and comfortable.

Is this really going to work?

No one can say yes 100% of the time, this will work, but we do know that it works for many of our patients.