



Annandale OBGYN  
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## Vaginal Dilators 101

### What is a vaginal dilator?

A vaginal dilator is a tube-shaped device that comes in a range of sizes to help stretch the opening of the vagina, as well as the vaginal canal.

### Why would I use a vaginal dilator?

The vagina can become narrower, shorter, drier and less elastic over time due to age, change in hormones, medication use, and history of cancer treatment. This can make sex or penetration painful. By stretching out the vagina, pain can be significantly reduced and pleasure during sexual activity can be restored.

### Where can I buy dilators?

Dilators can be purchased in sets of different sizes online. It is not necessary to buy a very expensive brand. They make dilators in both hard plastics and silicone, as well as with and without handles. Make sure you are buying the right size for you to start out depending on your personal anatomy.

Some brands we like are:

CalExotics <https://www.amazon.com/CalExoticsDr-Berman-Intimate-Basics-Dilator/dp/B00121B0H8>

Hope and Her <https://hopeandher.com/products/vaginal-insert-set>

### How do I use a dilator?

Start with the smallest dilator in the kit you purchased. You will increase the size over time as your discomfort improves.

Find a comfortable place, such as a bed or couch to lay down on and open your legs shoulder-width apart. Making sure in this position, you can touch your vulva comfortably with your dominant hand.

Using a water-based non-fragranced lubricant, such as K-Y jelly or Slippery Stuff, apply the lube to the outside of your dilator and the opening of your vagina.

Take some deep breaths and try to relax your pelvic floor muscles by sinking your hips into the bed or couch before starting.

Using your non-dominant hand, spread the labia (lips) of your vagina open.

With your dominant hand, insert the rounded end of the dilator into the vagina. Do this slowly and gently. You should stop if you feel resistance or true pain. The dilator is the right size for you if you feel a light pressure. If there is no pressure at all or any discomfort, you should increase by one size.

Once the dilator is inserted, you may need to let the dilator rest inside the vagina for a few seconds to allow your muscles to relax.

Gently move the dilator in and out and around in circles for 5-10 minutes. You may need to apply more lubricant as you go.

Apply cool packs before and afterwards if needed to reduce pain and swelling.



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You don't need to use the dilators alone! You can make this a fun sexual exercise with your partner, as well.

### **How often should I use my vaginal dilators?**

We recommended 3x per week for 5-10 minutes each time. You should increase the size of your dilator, when you are not feeling any pressure or pain. Continue with the next size up for as long as needed until you are again feeling no pressure or pain with insertion or use. Continue increasing the size until needed based on your personal goals (for example, until you can have penetrative intercourse with your partner without pain).

### **How to care for my vaginal dilators?**

Clean the dilators with hot water and dish soap after use. Rinse thoroughly. Store as recommended by the manufacturer?

### **Are there risks of using vaginal dilators?**

You are at risk of vaginal infection if you do not clean the dilator thoroughly between uses. It is always a good idea to urinate after dilator use to prevent urinary tract infection, as well. You might experience a little bit of vaginal spotting after use, which is not worrisome. You will not harm yourself as long as you are listening to your body and not continuing if you are in a lot of discomfort or experiencing resistance. You may experience slight soreness for a day or two after using the dilator, but with regular use this will improve over time.

Be patient! Dilator therapy can take months until you are at your goal, but it is worth it. You will see noticeable improvement if done regularly and consistently.

Your healthcare provider may recommend additional prescription creams to help if you have severe discomfort.