



How to Use Vaginal Dilators

When is vaginal dilation used?

Vaginal dilation is used to lengthen and widen a vagina in women that have:

- Extra tissue dividing the vagina (vaginal septum)
- A small or not fully formed vagina (vaginal agenesis)
- Surgery to make a vagina – you need to use dilation after surgery to keep the area open
- After pelvic radiation for cancer treatment
- Tight vaginal muscles (vaginismus)

How do the dilators work?

Most women and teens without a fully formed vagina have a vaginal dimple, where the tissue puckers in a bit, or a small vaginal opening. Dilators are used to stretch the tissue in this area, slowly over time. The dilators come in different sizes. As the vagina stretches, you will start using the next size dilator.

When should I start using dilation?

Unless you have had surgery to make a vagina, it is your decision if and when you want to dilate. We recommend that you wait to start dilation until you are completely ready. Your healthcare provider will help you make decisions about dilation. They will show you how to dilate and will support you throughout the process.

How long does dilation take?

It can take 2 to 15 months to create a functioning vagina. This means the vagina is stretched to a length to have comfortable sex. Stretching the tissue to form a vagina takes less time the more often you dilate. We recommend dilating for about 20 minutes, 2 times each day. Using the dilators at the same time each day, such as first thing in the morning or before you go to sleep, will help you get into a routine.

How will I know if I am using the dilators correctly?

Your nurse or doctor will show you how to use the dilator. You will have time to practice placing the dilator in the right spot before you start using it at home.

How do I use the dilators?

Set aside about 20 minutes, 2 times each day when you will have privacy in your bedroom or place of your choice. To help the time go by faster, you may want to listen to music or watch TV while you dilate. To let others in your household know you do not want to be disturbed, you may want to:

- Hang a “Do not disturb” sign on your door

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- Put a lock on your door
- Have a code word with your mom or dad

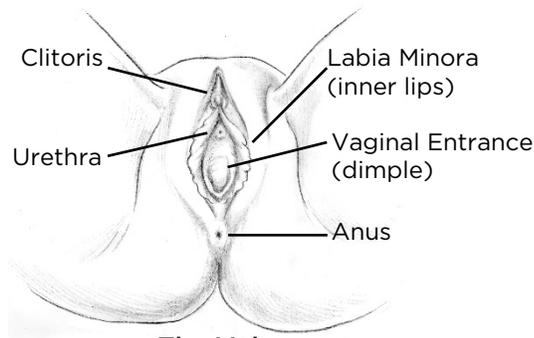
Getting ready

Before you dilate:

1. If you have time, take a warm bath for at least 10 minutes – The warm water helps to soften the tissue where you will be using the dilators. This will make the tissue stretch more easily.
2. Wash your dilator – Use warm water and mild soap then dry it off.
3. Use a small amount of water-based lubricant – put a small amount of lubricant, such as K-Y Jelly or coconut oil on the tip of your dilator.

Using the dilator

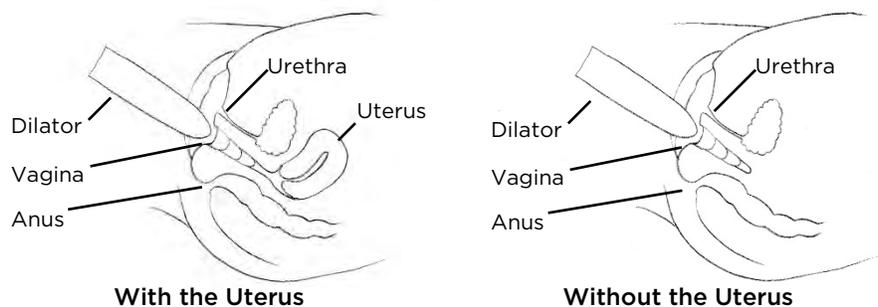
1. Lie on your back and bend your knees. Let your legs relax to the side.
2. Place the lubricated dilator against your skin, right in your vaginal dimple (this is entrance of your vagina). You can find this spot by slowly and gently sliding the tip of the dilator along the spot below your urethra (where your urine leaves your body). See the picture below.



The Vulva

Using pressure, push the dilator at an angle toward your lower back or tail bone. See the pictures below. **Do not** use an in and out motion. Hold the dilator in place for 20 minutes.

Using the Vaginal Dilators



With the Uterus

Without the Uterus

To Learn More

- Pediatric and Adolescent Gynecology
206-987-3005
- Ask your child's healthcare provider
- www.seattlechildrens.org

Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your child's nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.

You should feel pressure but not pain. If you have pain, you may be pushing too hard. If you don't feel anything, you may not be using enough pressure. After a few tries, you will feel the right amount of pressure.

If you have any bleeding or pain, call the clinic at 206-987-3005.

After you dilate

1. Rinse the dilator off with mild soap and water, dry it and put it away.
2. Keep your dilator in a safe place. Some women and teens suggest buying a lock box to store the dilators for privacy.

How often do I need to see the doctor during dilation?

You will see your doctor often while you are dilating to make sure it is going well for you. As your vagina stretches, your doctor will have you start using the next size dilator. It is a good idea to bring your dilator with you to your clinic visits.

What if the dilators don't work or I can't use them?

Most women learn to use the dilators and are able to create a vagina. Sometimes, it can take a while for you to feel comfortable using them. If you have any questions about how to use the dilators, ask your doctor or nurse. If you have been using the dilators regularly and you don't get good results, your doctor may suggest seeing a pelvic floor physical therapist or surgery.

When can I have sex?

The choice to have sex is an important decision. We encourage you to talk with your healthcare provider, family member or friend before you make this decision. It is very important to talk to your doctor before you have sex to make sure it will be comfortable for you. Your doctor will also want to talk to you about how to prevent sexually transmitted infections.

After dilation, most women do not have pain during sex. Most women will go on to have a healthy and satisfying sex life. Talk to your doctor if you are having pain during sex or you are worried about sex.