

Vaginal dilators

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Why do I need to use vaginal dilators

You have been asked to use vaginal dilators as a result of your recent treatment. For some women the idea of using a dilator can be embarrassing and feel uncomfortable and because of this it can easily be put off.

Your vagina may have become narrowed and shortened due to formation of scar tissue from your treatment. Vaginal dilators have been designed to reduce your risk of any scarring and to assist you in keeping your vagina supple. The aim of vaginal dilators is to stretch the vagina gently; this will help reduce any long-term discomfort from further treatments, follow-up examinations and sexual intercourse.

Relaxation techniques

- We hold tension and tightness in the pelvic muscles, just as we do in our shoulders.
- It is advisable to be as relaxed as possible prior to and whilst using the dilator. It may also help to have a bath and/or listen to some relaxing music.
- It is better to empty your bladder before inserting the dilator.

How to use your dilator

- When using your dilator for the first time wash it in hot soapy water and dry thoroughly, ensuring that all traces of soap have been removed.
- Use the dilator in an environment that is comfortable and ensures privacy.
- The recommended position to use the dilator is to lie flat on your back, or on your side. Your knees should be bent and legs slightly apart.
- If you are using Amielle vaginal dilators, make sure you attach the handle as directed.
- Apply a water base lubricant around the tip of the dilator and a small amount inside the opening of your vagina.

- The dilator should be inserted at an angle towards the back wall of your vagina, as pressure to the front wall of your vagina may cause pain and discomfort. Never use force.
- Depending on the reason for your referral, you may not be able to insert the whole dilator on the first few attempts. Only insert the dilator to a level that feels comfortable for you. Initially you may not be able to insert the whole dilator. Don't worry. Usually over time this will improve as the vagina stretches.
- Once you have positioned the dilator, gently move the dilator in a circular motion for 5 minutes.
- As you remove the dilator, gently push it in and out slowly and move it from side to side.
- We advise you to repeat this sequence 3-4 times a week; however this can be reduced if you are having regular vaginal intercourse or using a vibrator.
- Once you have finished using your dilator, it should be washed in warm soapy water, rinsed and dried thoroughly. Do not place the dilator directly on a heat source. Use a clean, soft cloth to dry the dilator. The dilator can be stored in the bag provided.

Altering size

Your nurse will advise you which size to use and when to increase the size used. Occasionally you may need to use a size smaller if a larger size becomes too uncomfortable.

Never use force when inserting the dilator. If there is difficulty in inserting a different size may be required. If you notice tightness when inserting the dilator you may need to use it more often.

Bleeding

Initially you may notice some blood spotting after using the dilators. Stop using the dilator for 2-3 days to let it heal and then try again.

If you experience persistent fresh bleeding and or pain contact your clinical nurse specialist or GP.

Further information

The intention of the dilator is to improve your vagina's stretchiness so that sexual intercourse and/or follow-up examinations are more comfortable and less painful. However, you should never feel pressured to use one.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact:

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Telephone: 01271 370210

The Fern Centre
Telephone: 01271 311855

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or email ndht.pals@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

Have your say

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

'Care Opinion' comments forms are on all wards or online at www.careopinion.org.uk.

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This leaflet was designed by the Communications Department.
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