

# General Dilator Instructions

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A **dilator** is a tube-shaped device used to gently stretch the vagina. These are general instructions on how to use a dilator. They are not necessarily specific to your condition. Always follow your doctor's instructions when using a dilator.

## Supplies you will need:

- **Dilator set:** use a plastic or silicone dilator (you can buy these online or at a pharmacy). Start with whichever dilator you think you will be able to insert easily and without discomfort into your vagina. If you don't know which one that is, start with the smallest size you have.
- **Lubricant:** use water-based or silicone-based lubricant, depending on what kind of dilator you have. Never use a silicone-based lubricant with a silicone dilator or toy.
- **Small mirror:** this may help you find your vaginal opening
- **Towel:** the lubricant will make your hands very slippery, so it is nice to have a towel nearby

## Getting ready to use a dilator

Find a private space where you will be comfortable and no one will disturb you. It is important for you to be in control and to relax. Plan for 10-20 minutes of private time, 4 to 5 times a week, to use the dilator.

## Instructions:

1. Gather your supplies and get in a comfortable position (such as reclining or lying down). Put some lubricant on the tip of the dilator so it is ready to use.
2. Focus on breathing in and out. As you breathe out, relax your muscles.

- Start by relaxing your neck muscles. Each time you breathe out, focus on relaxing other muscles moving down your body (shoulders, arms, back, legs). Finish with relaxing your pelvic muscles.
3. Slowly and gently start to push the dilator into the vagina.
    - At first, you may only be comfortable placing the dilator at the vaginal opening and not pushing it in any more. That is okay. The goal is to get used to something that causes discomfort until it no longer causes discomfort.
  4. When you feel ready, try pushing the dilator into your vagina about 2 inches.
    - Check with your physician about how deeply you need to insert the dilator. The pelvic muscles which tend to tense up are about 1 inch inside the vaginal opening. If you feel pain, stop and then gently pull the dilator back until there is no pain.
  5. Leave the dilator in place for 10 to 20 minutes. You may have to hold the dilator in place during this time.
    - You may read, use cell phone apps, watch TV, meditate, or just think of things that make you feel happy during this time. Some people visualize (think about and try to picture) the dilator relaxing their vaginal muscles.
  6. After 10 to 20 minutes, slowly remove the dilator.
    - After removing the dilator, clean it with regular soap and water. Dry it and put it away.
    - The dilator does not need to be sterilized. Do not use bleach or other cleaning products on it.

### Other tips for using a dilator

- Some people prefer to dilate while in the shower. This is also a good option. If you choose to do so, be careful when you use the lubricant because lubricant can make the floor of the shower very slippery.
- You will be ready to move up to the next dilator size when you are able to insert and remove the current dilator without discomfort.
  - When you decide to change to a larger dilator, spend the first few minutes dilating with the smaller size before changing to the next larger size for the rest of the dilating session.
- You can use a dilator for a few minutes before trying to have penetrative intercourse (sex where something is inserted into your vagina) to help reduce discomfort during sex.

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