



Improving Sexual Health: Vaginal Lubricants, Moisturizers, Dilators & Counseling

Lubricants and moisturizers are effective in relieving pain during intercourse for many midlife women.

If you have more severe vaginal dryness and related pain, or if lubricants and moisturizers don't work well for you, see your health care provider as other options are available.

How do vaginal lubricants work?

Vaginal lubricants work by reducing the friction associated with thin, dry genital tissue. They come in liquid or gel form and are applied to the vagina and vulva right before intercourse (it can be helpful to apply them to the penis or any body part/instrument inserted into the vagina as well). Lubricants are absorbed into the skin, are immediate-acting, and provide temporary relief from vaginal dryness and related pain during intercourse.

Lubricants are available either as water-based, silicone-based, or oil-based products. Water-based lubricants have the advantage of being non-staining and they wash off fairly easily. If you are concerned about staining your sheets, put down a large bath or beach towel on top of your sheets. Do not use **oil-based lubricants (such as petroleum jelly and baby oil) because they can cause vaginal irritation.** Additionally, oil-based lubricants may make condoms less effective. Some lubricants have glycerin and others are glycerin free. We recommend that you avoid glycerin, flavored lubricants, and warming/"tingling" lubricants. Silicone lubricants are often good options. For a list of lubricants that are available in drug and grocery stores, and online, see pages 4-5 of this handout.

What are vaginal moisturizers?

Vaginal moisturizers are products that are intended to ease vaginal dryness. They need to be used regularly to maintain moisture (up to three times a week). They are absorbed into the skin, increasing moisture to the affected area. Moisturizers may not provide enough comfort during intercourse, so personal lubricants may still be needed. One of the downsides of vaginal moisturizers is that they are messy. Because the vagina absorbs what it needs and excretes the rest, you may want to wear a panty-liner. For a list of moisturizers see, page 6 of this handout.

Lubricants and moisturizers will not protect you against pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

Can I use a spermicidal gel as a lubricant?

While lubricating, spermicidal gels have a very chemical taste and smell, so are not preferred for oral sex. Some women experience irritation when they are used externally on the vulva.

What is a vaginal dilator?

Dilators are used by some women to slowly stretch the vaginal tissue and help with vaginal muscle relaxation. Dilators come in several sizes and are made of plastic or silicone. You need to use a lubricant with your dilator. Some women find slow, progressive vaginal dilation a helpful way to return to intercourse. For a list of dilators, see page 7 of this handout.

What kind of lubricant should I use with a condom?

Many women of child-bearing age use condoms to help prevent pregnancy. In addition, latex condoms help to prevent the spread of sexually transmitted

infections like HIV. Use **water-based, silicone lubricants, spermicidal gels with latex or polyurethane condoms** – do not use oil-based lubricants with **condoms**. Non-water based lubricants such as baby oil and Vaseline® can weaken condoms causing tears or disintegration. It is best to buy non-lubricated condoms and apply your own lubricant. Many different types of condoms are available:

- Latex – must be used with water based lubricant.
- Polyurethane – latex free, thinner and stronger, less constricting fit.
- Non-latex polyisoprene – higher sensitivity, without latex.
- Female condoms, Nitrile FC2 (synthetic rubber) – available in latex-free material.
- Natural lamb – does not prevent against sexually transmitted infections. They only help to prevent pregnancy.

Is there counseling for sexual health and enrichment at the University of Michigan?

Yes. The Center for Sexual Health at the University of Michigan is a great resource for patients who would like more information or help with sexual enrichment. Visit their website at:

<http://uofmhealth.org/medical-services/sexual-health>

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Below is a list of lubricants that are widely available in drug and grocery stores. You can also buy lubricants online at:

- <http://www.amazon.com>
- <http://www.babeland.com>
- <http://www.drugstore.com>
- <http://www.goodvibes.com>

Common Lubricants for intercourse

Astroglide® And Astroglide Free®	Is a long-lasting light lubricant that is odorless and flavorless. It is water soluble. Many like it because it is long-lasting and it does not become “stringy”. Found at local grocery and drug stores. Astroglide Free is glycerin-free.
I-D Millennium®	Is a silicone lubricant. Very slippery in texture. Can be used as massage oil, too.
K-Y Jelly®	Is considered an all-purpose lubricant that many people have found helpful with a “medium” degree of thickness. Some say it comes out too fast and gets “gummy”.
KY Gel®	Is preferred by some as less sticky than K-Y Jelly.
Liquid Silk®	Is glycerin-free and odorless. It has a lotion-like feel. Order from http://www.goodvibes.com
Lubrin®	Is a suppository that many post-menopausal women find to be a helpful lubricant because it is inserted into the vagina. Some women say it is almost too much lubricant.
Maximus®	Is thick in texture like a lotion. Natural feeling and long lasting. Order through http://amazon.com
Pre-Seed®	Fertility-friendly lubricant. Glycerin-free. Will not limit or harm sperm. Recommended by fertility experts.
Probe Silky Light®	Is gentle, odorless, and flavorless. Both glycerin and paraben-free. This is a good lubricant for those who have sensitivities.

Slippery Stuff Gel®	Is a glycerin-free, flavorless, thicker lubricant. Found on drugstore.com and http://goodvibes.com
Sliquid®	Silicone, water-based varieties and hybrids. No glycerin or parabens.
Surgilube®	Water soluble, contains propylene glycol, and is latex compatible.
Sylk®	100% Natural, water-based lubricant, fragrance-free, no chemical additives or preservatives, paraben-free. Sylk is safe if ingested or if used with condoms.

Hypoallergenic Lubricants – Organic and Chemical Free

Pink®	Made with silicone, vitamin E and Aloe vera, washes off easily. Glycerin-free, good slipperiness. Can be used as a moisturizer, too.
Just Like Me®	Made by Pure Romance, pH balanced, safe for latex or polyurethane condoms.
Good Clean Love®	95% organic materials, paraben and glycerin-free.

Moisturizers

Extra Virgin Olive Oil (natural):	Can be used as a moisturizer by placing on finger and rubbing into the vaginal canal. Do not use other food oils as they can trap bacteria.
Vitamin E Oil (natural):	Can be used as a suppository or pure vitamin E oil is found in bottle form or capsule form. If you use the capsules, break them open and apply to the vaginal canal. You can apply vitamin E oil one or more times a day. Do not use with latex condoms as they weaken the condom, cause tears, and can cause disintegration of the condom.
Coconut Oil: (natural)	Coconut oil can be used on the outside of the vaginal entrance and just inside the edge. Coconut oil is good for rejuvenating dry, irritated tissues and for keeping vaginal dryness at bay. Coconut oil should be pure, without other oils or additives.
** If you are prone to urinary tract infections, yeast infections, or have diabetes, you may not be able to use natural oils.	
Luvena®	Is a vaginal moisturizer that can be found at your local drug store. It is hormone, glycerin and paraben free. It has probiotics that help women who have recurrent vaginal infections balance their natural flora as well as lower their vaginal pH.
Replens®	Good for post-menopause or after medical treatments (such as chemotherapy and hormone therapy) that dry the vagina. This moisturizer is inserted into the vagina with an applicator 1-3 times per week. Women who choose not to use or cannot use localized estrogen replacement to the vagina often use Replens.

Dilators

http://www.vaginismus.com	Offers reasonably priced set of 5 hard plastic dilators in graduating sizes with attachable handle for ease of insertion.
http://www.pureromance.com	Offers flexible dilator sets in various sizes.
http://www.coopersurgical.com	Milex dilators are flexible, silicone dilators in graduated sizes.
http://www.cmtmedical.com	Syracuse Medical Devices vaginal dilators are medical grade non-latex rigid plastic dilators. Seven graduated sizes are available.

For more information on sexual enrichment and aids, visit these websites:

- <http://www.goodvibes.com>
- <http://www.babeland.com>
- <http://www.ohmibod.com>
- <http://www.erotica-readers.com>
- <http://www.cleansheets.com>