

Dilator Training Guide

What are dilators?

Vaginal dilators are tube shaped devices used to help stretch tight muscles located within your pelvic floor (rectal dilators are often a slightly different cone-shape). They come in different shapes, sizes, and materials (often plastic or silicone). There are even some that will expand or vibrate depending on your needs.

Why should I use a dilator?

People who have pain with penetration, tampon use, speculum insertion, or other insertion activities may benefit from dilator use to help stretch the muscles and desensitize the tissue.

Mind-body connection.

Sometimes your body's reaction to pain can be to create a spasm to protect you. If your pelvic floor has had a painful experience (i.e. assault, childbirth, or a previous painful encounter involving insertion), your body remembers this pain and can create a similar pain response later on. Think of a Venus fly trap: anything that goes near it will cause the plant to close its teeth; if your pelvic floor is hypersensitive, anything that comes near it (tampon, penis, toy, etc.) can cause the muscles to spasm and

tighten. This can create pain and guarding. A dilator, when used properly, can help to reduce this pain-spasm cycle and desensitize the pelvic floor to recognize that something can be inserted without the need to spasm and protect you!

What you will need:

- Dilator
- Lubricant (non-silicone based)
- Pillows (for comfort if needed)
- Private space and time

How do I use it?

Start by making sure you are in a comfortable space and your dilator is clean. Consider doing this in a bathtub or reclined in bed with pillows to prop you up. Regardless of position, you want to make sure your muscles are able to relax, and you are able to reach your pelvis without straining.

Begin by applying lubricant that is compatible with your dilator. If you are experiencing anxiety or stress before inserting your dilator, focus first on deep breathing and relaxation.

Place your dilator at the entrance of your vagina (or anus if you are using a rectal dilator) and focus on how

your body is feeling at this phase before working on insertion. Keep up with your nice, deep, steady breathing.

If able, insert the dilator into your canal slowly while continuing to check in with your body, your breathing, and your mind. If you meet resistance: pause and let your body unwind before proceeding any further. You do not want to increase pain or anxiety.

You may not be able to insert your dilator fully each time, and that is perfectly fine! It is a work in progress.

Once the dilator is inserted, focus on relaxation and deep breathing to allow your body to adjust.

It is important not to allow your pain to increase beyond a 3 out of 10 on the pain scale! You are trying to create a positive experience and retrain your body and mind.

How can I progress this?

You can progress this by introducing small movements with the dilator or increasing the size of the dilator.

How often should I do this?

Try to create a daily routine. If this is too much, then try every other day.

Scan here for more Women's Health resources!



Pelvic Wand Training Guide

What are pelvic wands?

A pelvic wand is similar to a dilator but has a slightly different shape and function. It is curved to allow for easier insertion with one end thin and flat making it easier for rectal use, and one end a bit thicker with a point for deeper tissue massage and trigger point work. Some pelvic wands have the option to vibrate or be warmed/cooled depending on brand and style.

Why should I use a pelvic wand?

People who have pain with penetration, tampon use, speculum insertion, or other insertion activities may benefit from pelvic wand use to help stretch the muscles and desensitize the tissue. However, you can also use the pelvic wand for trigger point work, specific muscle release, and splinting with defecation.

Mind-body connection.

Sometimes your body's reaction to pain can be to create a spasm to protect you. If your pelvic floor has had a painful experience (i.e. assault, childbirth, or a previous painful encounter involving insertion), your body remembers this pain and can create a similar pain response later on. Think of a Venus fly trap: anything that goes near it will cause the plant to close its teeth; if your pelvic floor is hypersensitive, anything that comes near it (tampon, penis,

toy, etc.) can cause the muscles to spasm and tighten. This can create pain and guarding. A wand, when used properly, can help to reduce this pain-spasm cycle and desensitize the pelvic floor to recognize that something can be inserted without the need to spasm and protect you!

What you will need:

- Pelvic Wand
- Lubricant (non-silicone based)
- Pillows (for comfort if needed)
- Private space and time

How do I use it?

Start by making sure you are in a comfortable space and your pelvic wand is clean. Consider doing this in a bathtub or reclined in bed with pillows to prop you up. Regardless of position, you want to make sure your muscles are able to relax, and you are able to reach your pelvis without straining.

Begin by applying lubricant that is compatible with your pelvic wand. If you are experiencing anxiety or stress before inserting your wand, focus first on deep breathing and relaxation.

Place your wand to the entrance of your vagina or anus and focus on how your body is feeling at this phase before working on insertion.

Keep up with your nice, deep, steady breathing.

If able, insert the wand into your canal slowly while continuing to check in with your body, your breathing, and your mind. If you meet resistance: pause and let your body unwind before proceeding any further. You do not want to increase pain or anxiety.

You may not be able to insert your wand fully, and that is perfectly fine! It is a work in progress.

If using the wand as a dilator, focus on relaxation and deep breathing once inserted to allow your body to adjust. If using this for sweeping and trigger point work, allow gentle sweeping type motions (think of making a "U" shape along the bottom of your pelvic floor).

You are NOT trying to knock the wind out of yourself! This should be gentle. It is important not to allow your pain to increase beyond a 3 out of 10 on the pain scale! You are trying to create a positive experience and retrain your body and mind.

How often should I do this?

If you are using a pelvic wand as a dilator, try to create a daily routine. For deeper tissues work, spacing this out to every other day or every three days can be helpful.

Scan here for more Women's Health resources!



Partner Internal Pelvic Floor Massage

What is a pelvic floor massage?

The pelvic floor is the bowl of muscles located at the base of the pelvis. Internal pelvic floor massage is using your finger gently inserted inside the vagina or rectum and applying gentle pressure or sweeping to the muscles within. The pelvic floor muscles can benefit from massage much like other tight or sensitive muscles in your legs or back.

Why would I perform an internal pelvic floor massage?

People who have pain with penetration or other insertion activities may benefit from internal massage to help stretch the muscles and desensitize the tissue. This is NOT intended to be a sexual act but is instead meant to help your partner reduce their tension or pain as well as improve your understanding of their internal pelvic floor musculature and pain points.

Mind-body connection.

Sometimes the body's reaction to pain can be to create a spasm to protect you. If the pelvic floor has had a painful experience (i.e. assault, childbirth, or a previous painful encounter), the body remembers this pain and can create a similar pain response later on. Think of a Venus fly trap: anything that goes near it will cause the plant to close its teeth; if your pelvic floor is hypersensitive, anything that comes near it (tampon, penis, toy, etc.) can cause the muscles

to spasm and tighten. This can create pain and guarding. When performed properly, massage can help reduce this pain-spasm cycle and desensitize the pelvic floor to recognize that something can be inserted without the need to spasm and protect you!

What you will need:

- Lubricant
- Pillows (for comfort if needed)
- Private space and time

How do we do it?

First things first: both you and your partner need to keep open and honest communication throughout the entire process.

Start by making sure you are in a comfortable space and your hands are clean. Your partner may feel comfortable reclined in bed with pillows propping under them for support. Whatever position they are in, you want to make sure they are able to relax.

Begin by applying lubricant to your finger. If your partner is experiencing anxiety or stress before inserting your finger, help them to focus first on deep breathing and relaxation. If they continue to experience anxiety or tension, don't go any further. This was a good first step!

If your partner is comfortable, place your finger against the entrance of their vagina or anus and help them focus on how their body is feeling at this phase before working on insertion. Encourage them to continue with their nice, deep,

steady breathing.

If able, insert your finger into their canal slowly while continuing to check in with their body, their breathing, and their mind. If you meet resistance: pause and let their body unwind before proceeding any further. You do not want to increase pain or anxiety.

You may not be able to insert your finger fully, and that is perfectly fine! It is a work in progress.

Once your finger is inserted, help them focus on relaxation and deep breathing to allow their body to adjust. If they can tolerate it, you can gently "sweep" your finger along the bowl of muscles (think of making a "U" shape along the bottom of their pelvic floor).

This should be gentle. It is important not to allow their pain to increase beyond a 3 out of 10 on the pain scale! You are trying to create a positive experience while they retrain their body and mind.

How often should we do this?

Trying to create a consistent routine is helpful, but the frequency will depend on how your partner's body is responding.

Scan here for more Women's Health resources!



Self-Internal Pelvic Floor Massage

What is a pelvic floor massage?

The pelvic floor is the bowl of muscles located at the base of the pelvis. Internal pelvic floor massage is using your finger gently inserted inside the vagina or rectum and applying gentle pressure or sweeping to the muscles within. The pelvic floor muscles can benefit from massage much like other tight or sensitive muscles in your legs or back.

Why would I perform an internal pelvic floor massage?

People who have pain with penetration or other insertion activities may benefit from internal massage to help stretch the muscles and desensitize the tissue. This is intended to help you reduce tension or pain as well as improve your understanding of your internal pelvic floor musculature and pain points.

Mind-body connection.

Sometimes your body's reaction to pain can be to create a spasm to protect you. If your pelvic floor has had a painful experience (i.e. assault, childbirth, or a previous painful encounter involving insertion), your body remembers this pain and can create a similar pain response later on. Think of a Venus fly trap: anything that goes near it will cause the plant to close its teeth; if your pelvic floor is hypersensitive, anything

that comes near it (tampon, penis, toy, etc.) can cause the muscles to spasm and tighten. This can create pain and guarding. When performed properly, massage can help reduce this pain-spasm cycle and desensitize the pelvic floor to recognize that something can be inserted without the need to spasm and protect you!

What you will need:

- Pelvic Wand
- Lubricant (non-silicone based)
- Pillows (for comfort if needed)
- Private space and time

How do I do it?

Start by making sure you are in a comfortable space and your hands are clean. You may feel comfortable reclined in bed with pillows propped under you for support or in a bathtub. Whatever position you are in, you want to make sure you are able to relax your muscles.

Begin by applying lubricant to your finger or thumb (whichever finger you choose to use). If you are experiencing anxiety or stress before inserting your finger, be sure to focus first on deep breathing and relaxation.

If you are comfortable, place your finger against the entrance of your vagina or anus and try to focus on

how your body is feeling at this phase before working on insertion. Continue to work on your nice, deep, steady breathing.

If able, insert your finger into the canal slowly continuing to check in with your body, your breathing, and your mind.

If you meet resistance: pause and let your body unwind before proceeding any further. You do not want to increase pain or anxiety.

You may not be able to insert your finger fully, and that is perfectly fine! Just remember this is a work in progress.

Once your finger is inserted, continue to focus on relaxation and deep breathing to allow your body to adjust. If you can tolerate it, you can gently "sweep" your finger along the bowl of muscles (think of making a "U" shape along the bottom of your pelvic floor).

This should be gentle. It is important not to allow your pain to increase beyond a 3 out of 10 on the pain scale! You are trying to create a positive experience and retrain your body and mind.

How often should I do this?

Consistency is important, so trying to create a daily routine is helpful. If this is too much for you to tolerate, try to at least do this every other day.

Scan here for more Women's Health resources!

