

What You Need to Know about Dilator Training

Dilator Training Guide

What Are Dilators?

Dilators are tampon-shaped devices that come in graduated sizes to improve pelvic floor relaxation. They come in many sets, sizes and materials (usually plastic or silicone) as well as a variety of price points. Talk to your therapist about which dilator set might be best for you.

Why Should I Use Dilators?

If you have difficulty with tampon use, speculum examinations, or sexual activity involving penetration, this device is for you! The physical stretch to the pelvic floor tissue may be the first benefit you think about when inserting a dilator. While this is a plus, the mind-body connection during this type of training is even more important.

The Brain and Pain

When you have a painful experience, especially in the pelvic area, your brain and body remember it. You can have underlying anxiety and fear surrounding that negative experience. It's your brain's way of protecting you! But in this case, it's very unhelpful. This can create a difficult cycle of fear, muscle tension, pain, and then more fear. Dilator training, when done properly, can help to decrease the "danger signals" from your brain as you create a calm and pain free experience that you are able to control.

Instructions for Use

What Do I Need?

- Dilator
- Lubricant
- Towel
- Pillows
- 15 minutes of uninterrupted, private time

How Do I Do This?

Start in a comfortable position on your back. You should have your legs open in a "frog legged" position with your knees supported by pillows so you can relax your muscles. Your head and upper body should be propped up with pillows or supported by your head board so that you can easily reach your pelvis.

Apply a generous amount of safe personal lubricant to your dilator. Take several relaxing diaphragmatic breaths to calm your mind and body.

Place the dilator at the entrance to your vagina. Focus on how that feels and how your body responds. Slow your breathe and release muscle tension. If you are able, slowly progress the dilator into the vagina.

Again, focus on the sensation and try to release muscle tension from your body. If you meet resistance, stop, and let your body unwind before progressing any further. You may not be able to fully insert the dilator each time.

You may choose to leave the dilator in place for 10 minutes and practice relaxation techniques.

Consider placing a small rolled towel against the inserted dilator so you can more fully relax. Or you might want to move the dilator around to mimic a sexual experience.

It is important that you are not experiencing pain more than ~3/10 during this activity. You are trying to create a positive experience!

How Often?

Ideally every day, 4 days per week at a minimum.

How Do I Progress?

Once the size dilator you are using is no longer a challenge, meaning you are easily able to fully insert it without pain, you can move up to the next size. You may have to progress to the next size more slowly than the first. This is normal and perfectly fine. You may notice it takes you longer to progress beyond some sizes or you may need to go back to a smaller size after an extended break from training. This is all completely normal.

Do I Have To Do This Forever?

You should continue with this training until you are comfortably using the size dilator that most closely matches the size of your partner, tampon, etc. You may have to periodically return to dilator training if you begin to experience pain again.

Rehabilitation Services

Shapiro Clinical Center, 2nd Floor
330 Brookline Avenue, Boston, MA 02215
617-754-9100 | bidmc.org/pelvicfloorpt

Options for Purchasing

Dilators

CMTmedical.com

Store>Pelvic Pain>Dilators

Favorites include: Intimate Rose, Vaginismus set, Amielle Restore set

Amazon.com

Favorites include: VuVatech set, Intimate Rose

Intimaterose.com

Good Vibrations Stores

in Brookline and Cambridge

Lubricants

- Slippery Stuff (preferred)
- Sliquid
- Uberlube
- GoodCleanLove
- Coconut oil or Vitamin E oil

Disclaimer: Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center does not endorse any of the above products.

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