

# Dilation after Vaginoplasty

Dilation is important to maintaining your vaginal opening and depth. Dilation is the most important part of your vaginal care and is a life-long therapy. Ceasing dilation will lead to loss of depth and closure of your vaginal cavity, which is irreversible.

This is an initial guide - you may be given different instructions based on your wound healing.

## **Weeks 1–4:**

Dilate: 3 times/day

Dilator: SMALL-15 minutes

## **Weeks 5–6:**

Dilate: 3 times/day

Dilator: MEDIUM-15 minutes

## **Weeks 7–16:**

Dilate: 3 times/day

Dilator: LARGE-15 minutes

If you're finding it difficult to start dilating with the larger-sized dilator you may start with a smaller dilator for 5 minutes and then increase size.

During your first week home, dilation may be more painful due to increased inflammation of the vaginal tissues. It may be more difficult to insert the dilator at first. Please refer to the pelvic floor relaxation information provided here to guide you through dilation.

## **DO NOT cease dilations.**

At **4 months** (after 16 weeks) you can decrease the frequency of your dilations to twice daily with the LARGE dilator.

At **10 months** you can decrease the frequency of your dilations to once daily with the LARGE dilator.

After **1 year** it is recommended to dilate at least once weekly continuing to use the LARGE dilator.

If you start to have discomfort or feel like you are losing depth, increase the frequency of your dilations.

Penetrative sex does **not** replace the need for dilation to maintain vaginal depth.

On the day of your discharge from hospital there may not be time to complete 3 dilations. Please do your first dilation of the day whilst still in hospital. If you only have time for one additional dilation during the day, leave the dilator in for 30 minutes during that session. Resume regular schedule, 3 times daily, the following day.

**When travelling: always keep your dilators in your carry-on luggage**

## **Get ready:**

1. Wash your hands, clean your dilators with mild soap, and rinse them thoroughly
2. Pick a room that feels quiet and comfortable
3. Place a disposable pad or clean towel beneath your buttocks
4. Relax your pelvic floor:
  - Begin with 5-10 deep breaths, trying to think about breathing into your tummy
  - Focus your attention on your pelvic floor muscles, the muscles that run between your tailbone and pubic bone, and between your sitz bones
  - Imagine these muscles being made of butter or something soft
  - Visualize the muscles melting or easily moving if they are stretched
  - Try to imagine relaxing these muscles the same way you would relax your muscles before going pee
  - As you begin your dilation process try to maintain deep breaths
  - Continue to imagine your muscles being soft and easily stretched

## **What to do:**

5. Hold the dilator by the base with the tip pointing upwards, dots facing away from you
6. Apply about a tablespoon of lubricant to the tip of the dilator
7. Using a mirror or by touch, find the vaginal opening and gently insert the dilator as follows:
  - Insert the dilator at a 45° angle about 5 cm, the dots will be facing you
  - As you insert the dilator it will become parallel with the bed, dots will face the ceiling
  - Once the end of the vagina has been reached apply gentle and steady pressure
  - If the dilator feels painful as you're inserting it, pause to repeat your deep breathing and visualization, relaxing the muscles like you're about to go pee or pass gas
  - Try again to move the dilator further inwards
  - Repeat the above steps until the dilator is fully inserted
8. Keep the dilator in place as required
9. Gently remove the dilator and place it on the pad
10. Clean the lubricant from your vagina, particularly the backside of the vaginal opening
11. Wash your hands

## **Clean up:**

12. Clean your dilators with mild soap and rinse thoroughly
13. Dry the dilators and place in their case

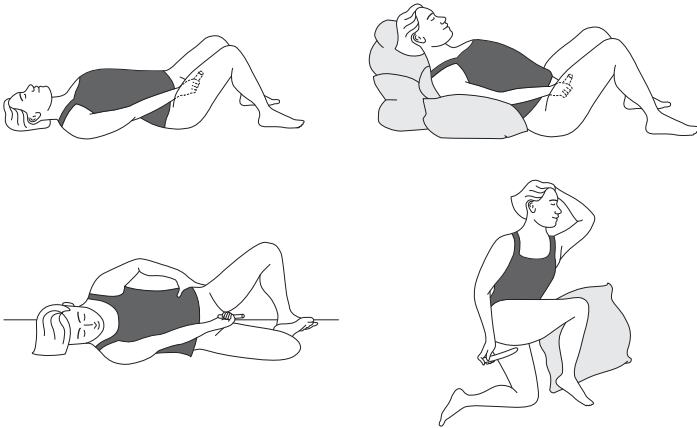
Swelling of the labia majora will decrease over time. It is not accurate to use the marks on the dilator to measure your vaginal depth.

## **Tips for dilating:**

- Try to keep the dilator from placing too much downward pressure toward your anus, as this can be a sensitive area after surgery
- Try to maintain deep breaths throughout dilation
- Try to keep your belly, groin, and hips as relaxed as possible
- Prop your head up with a pillow or place pillows under the knees to allow your muscles to relax fully while dilating
- If the dilator feels painful while you are removing it, repeat your pelvic floor relaxation
- You can add extra lubricant around the opening to your vagina if it's painful on removal

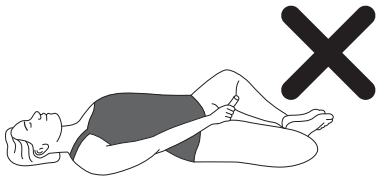
## Positions for dilating:

When dilating try to limit creating extra tension in other muscles or on your incisions

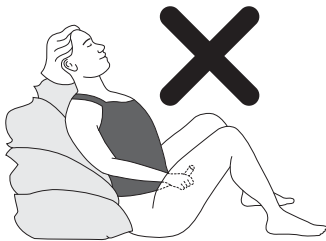


**Try** placing a few pillows behind your head to slightly elevate it, instead of straining your abdominal muscles to lift your head or sitting upright

**Try** placing several pillows under your knees/ legs to support them, instead of tensing your leg muscles to keep them lifted or letting your legs fall into a butterfly position



**Avoid** dilating in a full butterfly position as this can put strain and tension on your incisions and vagina



**Avoid** dilating sitting upright or slouched over as this can put extra pressure on your incisions and vagina

## Meditation for dilating:

Some people may find listening to a meditation helpful when dilating. Any meditation focused on relaxation can be helpful. A dilation specific meditation can be found in the following link:

<https://yourpaceyoga.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/dilator-meditation-for-the-trans-woman-yourpaceyoga.mp3>



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