

Using the Dilator

It is important to use the dilator after treatment to prevent scar tissue and narrowing of the vagina caused by the radiation therapy. It is usually 2 to 3 weeks after you have completed your radiation treatments or as discussed with your health care team. Please start using the dilator _____.

Using the dilator is important for 3 reasons

1. To allow your doctor to do a proper exam to evaluate treatment response and check for any disease recurrence.
2. To allow for comfortable and enjoyable sexual intercourse.
3. To prevent complications such as fluid collection in the uterus.

To use your dilator

1. Check the dilator before each use to make sure it is smooth. If there are any rough edges, do not use it.
2. Apply KY Jelly or any water soluble lubricant to the end of the dilator. Do not use vaseline as it is a petroleum based product and does not flow freely from the body.
3. Lie on your back with your knees bent and slightly apart. Choose a time of the day that you know you will not be interrupted. Some women find that using the dilator in the bath works better for them. Do not use perfumed bath oil or bubble bath in the water as it may irritate the vaginal tissues.
4. Insert the rounded edge of the dilator into your vagina gently and as deeply as you can without causing too much discomfort. If you experience pain, do not force the dilator further, stop and try to advance further the next day.

5. Hold the dilator in place for 10 minutes, applying gentle pressure. Some women find it difficult to hold the dilator in place for that length of time. In that case, roll up a towel and place against the outside end of the dilator, close your legs together and hold it in place.
6. After the 10 minutes, gently remove the dilator and clean well with hot, soapy water. Rinse the dilator well, to make sure that there is no soap residue left on the dilator.
7. **Never** boil the dilator as it does not need to be sterile.
8. Sometimes it may be hard to insert the dilator. If you are having pain, a large amount of bright red bleeding or you are just not able to insert the dilator, please contact your radiation oncologist or nurse for further direction.

When to use the dilator

- Use the dilator 3 times a week: Monday, Wednesday and Friday.
- Each use should be 10 minutes long.
- Do this for 6 months.
- After 6 months, if you are not having sexual intercourse then use the dilator once a week.
- The first few times that you use the dilator after treatment there may be some vaginal spotting. This is normal as the tissues may be a little bit fragile after radiation. If you have a moderate amount of bleeding or pain, please call for further information.

If at any time you are having any questions or concerns regarding the dilator and its use, please call your radiation oncologist, Dr. _____, primary care nurse _____ at 905-387-9495, ext. _____ or Heidi at 905-387-9495.