Use and Care of Your Vaginal Dilator

Why do I Need a Vaginal Dilator?

Radiation therapy may cause scar tissue to form in the vagina. Scar tissue is less elastic than normal tissue. As a result, you may have discomfort during vaginal exams and intercourse. You can prevent scar tissue from forming by using a vaginal dilator (a smooth plastic rod), and/or by having regular sexual intercourse.

When Should I Start Using my Vaginal Dilator?

___ weeks after your radiation therapy ends you should start using the dilator or having intercourse at least 3 times a week. If you are unable to have intercourse, you should use your vaginal dilator.

You may have some spotting or bleeding from your dilator or intercourse the first few times. You may also have some discomfort. If discomfort occurs with intercourse, you and your partner may need to stop for a while and try again later. Using a water-based lubricant such as K-Y Jelly® or Astroglide® can ease discomfort during intercourse.

How to Use Your Vaginal Dilator

- Wash the dilator with soap and water before and after each use.
- Check the dilator to make sure it is smooth. Do not use the dilator if you find any rough spots.
- Coat the dilator with a water-based lubricant, such as K-Y Jelly® or Astroglide®. Do not use Vaseline®, baby oil, or other oil-based lubricants. They can irritate vaginal walls.
- Lie on your back with your knees bent and legs apart.
- Insert the rounded end of the dilator into your vagina as far as it will go without causing pain or discomfort.
- Close your knees and slowly straighten your legs.
- Keep the dilator in your vagina for about 10 minutes.
- Bend your knees, open your legs, and gently remove the dilator.
- Gently cleanse the skin around the vaginal opening.
- Wash the dilator after each use.

For additional information about Northwestern Memorial Hospital, please visit our Web site at www.nm.org.

Para asistencia en español, por favor llamar al Departamento de Representantes para Pacientes al 312.926.3112.

The entities that come together as Northwestern Medicine are committed to representing the communities we serve, fostering a culture of inclusion, delivering culturally competent care, providing access to treatment and programs in a nondiscriminatory manner and eliminating healthcare disparities. For questions, please call either Northwestern Memorial Hospital’s Patient Representatives Department at 312.926.3112, TDD/TTY 312.926.6363, the Northwestern Lake Forest Patient Relations manager at 847.535.8282 and/or the Northwestern Medical Group Patient Representatives Department at 312.695.1100, TDD/TTY 312.926.6363.

Developed by: NMH Department of Radiation Oncology. ©August 2016 Northwestern Memorial HealthCare
900891 (8/16) Use and Care of Your Vaginal Dilator