



**A vaginal dilator is a simple device that helps prevent narrowing of the vagina after radiation treatment.**

# Vaginal Dilator

Radiation treatment, especially *brachytherapy* to the vaginal area, can cause scar tissue to form. The scar forms slowly over several months and causes the upper part of the vagina to narrow. Over time, this narrowing will make sexual intercourse more difficult and uncomfortable. It will also make future vaginal exams more difficult.

Because this narrowing happens slowly, you can keep it from becoming a problem by gently stretching your vaginal tissues **every other day**. This can be done by:

- Having sexual intercourse with penetration.
- Using a *vaginal dilator*. A vaginal dilator is a plastic tube with a rounded end that you insert into your vagina.

**Use one of these methods every other day to prevent narrowing of the upper part of the vagina.** Do this for at least 6 months, or until your doctor says you may stop.

## Using the Dilator

Use the dilator every other day if you are **not** having sexual intercourse with penetration.

Some women prefer to use the dilator in the shower. Others prefer to lie down with their knees bent and apart. Do what is most comfortable for you. Follow these steps when using the dilator:

1. Put a water-based lubricant (such as K-Y Jelly) on the rounded end of the dilator. You may want to warm the lubricant first by placing the tube under warm water. Do **not** use Vaseline, baby oil, or other oil-based lubricants. They will irritate your vagina.
2. Separate your labia, and with a firm, gentle pressure, put the rounded end into your vagina as far as possible.
3. Keep the dilator in place for about 3 minutes.
4. Remove the dilator. Wash it with hot, soapy water, rinse well, and pat dry.

UW Medicine

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON  
MEDICAL CENTER



SEATTLE  
CANCER CARE  
ALLIANCE

UWMC Radiation Oncology

Box 356043

1959 N.E. Pacific St. Seattle, WA 98195

206-598-4100

## Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns.

UWMC Radiation Oncology: 206-598-4100

SCCA Radiation Oncology: 206-288-7318