



# Vaginismus Unveiled:

## A 5-Step Guide to Understanding, Relief, and Empowerment

Embarking on a **Path to Managing Vaginismus** and **Rediscovering Intimacy**



Unlock Your **Journey to Relief** Today!

A Comprehensive Guide by Materna Medical





## Introduction:

Do you dread going to the gynecologist because of traumatic pap smears? Does painful sex prevent you from achieving healthy intimacy with your partner? Do you find it impossible to insert a tampon? Or maybe you've been told you have an "overactive" or "tight" pelvic floor.

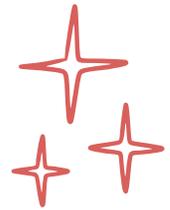
If any of this resonates, you may be suffering from a condition called **vaginismus**, **which involves** tightening of the vaginal muscles, and you are not alone.





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# 1 Understanding Vaginismus:

- **Vaginismus (vaj-uh-niz-muhs)** is a genito-pelvic pain penetration disorder that may cause painful vaginal penetration. It is thought to be caused by involuntary contraction of the vaginal pelvic floor muscles.
- If you are dealing with vaginismus, you may have heard clinicians or physical therapists use the term "hypertonic" to describe your pelvic floor. In simpler terms, this means that your pelvic floor muscles are tightly contracted and have difficulty relaxing.
- Vaginismus is a condition often characterized by painful intercourse, but it can also lead to discomfort or pain during any form of vaginal penetration, whether it's with a finger, speculum, or tampon. While dyspareunia is a general term used to describe "painful sex," it's important to note that it can be related to vaginismus. However, dyspareunia can also be caused by various other factors, independent of vaginismus.
- Vaginismus is a common condition and can affect women of all ages, including trans women if a vagina is constructed during gender-affirming surgery.<sup>1</sup> Recent data suggests up to 17% of those with a vagina are affected, but that number is thought to be underestimated, as many women do not seek help for the condition due to shame or embarrassment.<sup>2</sup>

## 2 Seeking Relief:

- If I have vaginismus, what can I do to find relief?
- First, take a moment to recognize that you are part of a community of women. The good news is there are a growing number of resources aimed at connecting individuals who suffer from vaginismus.
- Second, management of vaginismus is tailored to YOU. A big part of learning to overcome the symptoms of vaginismus is getting to know your body and what it needs. If you are someone whose symptoms are mostly spastic, pelvic floor relaxation might be what you need. If you are a survivor of sexual trauma and have an overwhelming fear of sex, you might benefit from desensitization therapy through dilator use coupled with regular talk therapy.

Below are the most common approaches to vaginismus treatment.  
See which one or ones might be right for you.

### Pelvic floor therapy



Pelvic floor therapy offers a promising option for those seeking relief from vaginismus. This initial approach focuses on empowering you with techniques to ease tension in your vaginal pelvic floor muscles. Through a combination of exercises and specialized breathing techniques, you'll learn how to consciously relax these muscles, ultimately minimizing painful spasms.

### Behavioral Therapy



Discover a pathway to overcoming vaginismus through tailored therapies. Explore options such as sex therapy, where skilled professionals guide you through intimate challenges and communication strategies.

### Dilators



Another common approach for finding relief for vaginismus is desensitization through vaginal dilators. Just as there is not a one-size fits all solution to vaginismus treatment, there is also no one-size fits all dilator. That's why we've developed Milli, a unique vaginal dilator designed to fit your unique vaginismus needs.

The goal of any dilator is to slowly desensitize your body to increasing degrees of vaginal penetration. Like other forms of exposure therapy, dilators help reduce the fear and anxiety associated with vaginal penetration, which can in turn help your vaginal pelvic muscles relax and break the cycle of pain.

## The Multimodal approach

It is important to remember that vaginismus is a psycho-sexual-physical condition. As a result, the best approaches include multiple modalities and techniques. Clinical studies showing the highest treatment success rates employ multiple therapies rather than one alone. We encourage you to talk to your provider about what strategies might work best for you.

## Underlying Causes and Associated Issues

**Vaginismus is a complex condition**, and its development can be attributed to various causes and related factors. It is important to distinguish between primary vaginismus and vaginismus associated with an underlying condition such as:

### Causes of vaginismus:

#### Psychological Factors

- Emotional factors, such as past traumatic experiences, anxiety, fear of pain during intercourse, or relationship issues, can play a significant role in the development of vaginismus.
- These psychological factors may lead to involuntary pelvic muscle contractions, making penetration painful or impossible.

#### Physical Factors

**Abnormal Discharge:** Changes in vaginal discharge can be indicative of various health concerns. If you experience unusual or foul-smelling discharge, it's crucial to consult with a healthcare provider to rule out infections or other issues that may contribute to discomfort during intercourse.

**Skin Changes:** Any unexpected changes in the appearance or texture of the vulva or vaginal area should not be ignored. Skin conditions, allergies, or reactions to hygiene products can sometimes contribute to discomfort during sex.

**Possible Infection:** Infections, such as yeast infections or sexually transmitted infections (STIs), can cause discomfort and pain during intercourse. Prompt diagnosis and treatment are essential to address these underlying issues.

**Inflammation:** Chronic inflammation in the genital area can lead to heightened sensitivity and discomfort. Conditions like vulvar vestibulitis or vestibulodynia may require specialized care.

**Genitourinary Syndrome of Menopause (GSM):** Individuals experiencing menopause may develop GSM, a condition of vaginal dryness and thinning that contributes to pain during intercourse.

## Symptoms and Associated Issues:

It's important to recognize that vaginismus itself can manifest with symptoms and related issues that may include:

- **Painful Intercourse:** This is one of the primary symptoms of vaginismus, where attempts at vaginal penetration result in severe pain or discomfort due to involuntary muscle contractions.
- **Difficulty with Gynecological Exams:** Women with vaginismus may find routine gynecological exams, such as Pap smears, extremely painful and challenging.
- **Fear and Anxiety:** Vaginismus can lead to heightened anxiety and fear related to sexual activity, which can, in turn, exacerbate the condition.
- **Relationship Strain:** Coping with vaginismus can place strain on relationships due to the challenges it presents in achieving sexual intimacy.
- **Reduced Sexual Satisfaction:** Both individuals with vaginismus and their partners may experience reduced sexual satisfaction and frustration due to the limitations it imposes.

Understanding these causes and related issues is essential for individuals and couples coping with vaginismus. Identifying the underlying factors can guide the selection of appropriate treatments and strategies to address the condition effectively.



### 3 How Dilators Help

The goal of any dilator is to slowly desensitize your body to increasing degrees of vaginal penetration. Dilators gradually prepare your vagina for penetration. They expand, stretch and relax the vaginal pelvic floor muscles. Dilators help reduce the fear and anxiety associated with vaginal penetration, which can in turn help your vaginal pelvic muscles relax and break the cycle of pain.

Just as there is not a one-size fits all solution to vaginismus treatment, there is also no one-size fits all dilator. That's why we've developed Milli.

Milli is a unique dilator that places you in complete control, providing expansion at your pace, at your size, at your fingertips.

→ Milli offers several advantages differences from traditional static dilators, including:

- Expands one millimeter at a time – Gives you the ability to go at your own pace
- No need to reinsert to adjust size – Avoid discomfort or inconvenience associated with re-insertion
- All-in-one device – Discreetly fits into your life

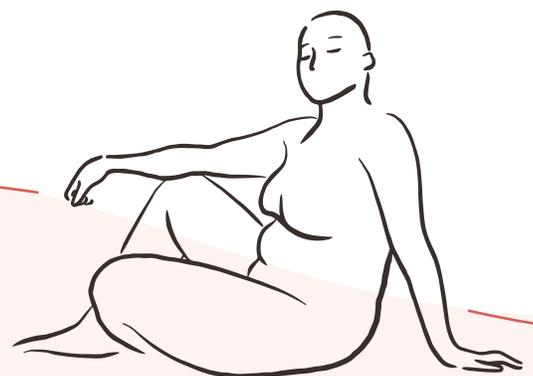




Success may not come overnight, but with patience and Milli by your side, it's within reach. Embrace the future you deserve – one millimeter at a time.

Are you ready to take the first step towards relief from vaginismus? Discover how Milli, our unique vaginal dilator, can help you on your journey.

 [Explore Milli](#)



## 4 Psychological Support and Therapy:

The first step to regaining your control over your sexual health and reclaiming your right to sexual pleasure is to find a physician or women's health practitioner that is well-versed in sexual pain as well as someone to support your mental health on this journey such as a sex therapist or coach.

Another integral part of the care team for sexual pain is a pelvic floor physical therapist. Each of these compassionate providers will help you with a different part of your journey towards sexual health.



## 5 Building a Support Network:

Embarking on your vaginismus journey is a courageous stride, and having the right support can truly redefine your experience. The beauty lies in nurturing a support network encompassing sexual partners, friends, family, and knowledgeable professionals.

They can be your steadfast pillars of understanding, the wellspring of unyielding encouragement, and the guiding compass that will illuminate your path toward a brighter tomorrow. Together, you're forging a path to a future filled with hope and empowerment.



Empower yourself with Milli, the vaginal dilator designed for your unique vaginismus needs.

Join the community of women taking control of their sexual health.

» GET STARTED with MILLI

## 6 Advice for Partners

Now, let's explore some invaluable insights for partners supporting individuals dealing with vaginismus and related dyspareunia.

- First and foremost, remember that **communication is key**. Research has shown that open and honest discussions about sexual issues are vital, both between partners and with healthcare providers. In fact, studies have found that communication on sexual issues tends to be low. So, make it a priority to engage in conversations about your partner's experiences and needs. This not only helps in understanding what they're going through but also fosters emotional connection and trust within the relationship.
- Additionally, it's essential to recognize that sex is not solely about penetration. While penetrative intercourse may be challenging for couples dealing with vaginismus, there are numerous other ways to maintain intimacy and sexual activity. **Sex therapist Stephanie Buehler** suggests focusing on non-penetrative forms of intimacy, such as affectionate gestures like kissing, holding hands, and cuddling.<sup>3</sup>
- Explore new avenues of physical connection that don't involve penetration. Remember that **intimacy is a multifaceted aspect of a relationship**, and there's more to it than just sex. By redefining your expectations and finding alternative ways to connect, you can continue to nurture a fulfilling and loving partnership.

The bottom line is that **vaginismus is manageable**, and with the right support and strategy, you can overcome this vicious cycle of fear and pain. We know how frustrating it can be. We know how lonely it can feel. But we are here to say that you, too, **can experience relief from vaginismus** and related painful sex.

And by shedding the shame of these far too common symptoms, we can form a community of women who no longer must suffer alone. It's time to put the US back in vaginismus.



Ready to embark on your journey towards more pleasurable intimacy?  
Explore the possibilities with Milli, your **trusted partner in vaginismus relief**.

»» [Learn More About Milli](#)

## Indications



The **Milli Vaginal Dilator** is a tool intended for controlled dilation of the vagina. It can be used for dilation for an examination (by your doctor), in preparation for a surgical procedure or to help relieve the symptoms of vaginismus (condition that involves tightening of the vaginal muscles) and related painful sex.

## Contraindications



If you have either of the following conditions, you **should NOT purchase or use** the Milli Vaginal Dilator:

- Active pelvic (lower abdomen) infections, or open wounds in the tissue inside or surrounding the vagina.
- Pregnant women should refer to their physician for guidance prior to purchasing or using the Milli Vaginal Dilator.

**Disclaimer:** This **eBook** contains educational information and that is not intended to replace medical diagnosis or advice from a doctor.

1. Turner, Kimberly, and Karla Robinson. "What Is Vaginismus? Symptoms and Treatment." GoodRx, GoodRx, 22 Aug. 2022. <https://www.goodrx.com/health-topic/sexual-health/vaginismus>.
2. Spector, Ilana P., and Michael P. Carey. "Incidence and prevalence of the sexual dysfunctions: a critical review of the empirical literature." Archives of sexual behavior 19.4 (1990): 389-408.
3. Fetters A. What happens to relationships when sex hurts. The Atlantic. November 8, 2019. Accessed October 18, 2023. <https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2019/11/vulvodynia-painful-sex-women/601567/>.





## Appendix

### Learn more about Milli

Milli is the first and only all-in-one expanding vaginal dilator specially designed to help women with vaginismus and related painful sex. It gradually expands inside your vagina at a pace that you control—helping you claim your sexual health.

### You're in control

Unlike static dilators that may have intimidating jumps in sizing, with Milli you can gradually expand and easily monitor the pace of dilation one millimeter at a time.

### Avoid discomfort from reinsertion

Milli's unique design gradually expands within your vagina without the discomfort or inconvenience of removal and reinsertion.



### Designed for comfort

Milli has a smooth silicone cover and small starting size of only 15mm (just over a 1/2). And it has optional built-in vibration.

### Fits into your life

With a discreet charging case and as a single, all-in-one device, Milli helps you keep your vaginal dilation therapy as private as you want it to be.





Ready to embark on your journey towards more pleasurable intimacy? Explore the possibilities with Milli, your trusted partner in getting help with **vaginismus relief.**

 [Purchase here](#)

Simply add the code  
→ **vaginismus25**  
during checkout.



We have a special treat for you – a coupon code that will help you save money on your purchase.