

Vaginal Dilation Information for Patients Receiving Treatment for Anal Cancer

This information is for people receiving 6 weeks of pelvic radiation treatment and getting chemotherapy during the first and fifth week of radiation.

You may have read or been told that people should begin trying to dilate two weeks after they have completed radiation. Because radiation to the anus can cause significant skin and tissue reactions, it may not be possible for you to begin dilating two weeks after you have completed your radiation.

After two weeks, check every few days to get a sense of how tender and sore you are feeling. There are a group of people who have been treated with radiation for anal cancer who find that it takes 3, 4 or even 5 or 6 weeks before they are able to begin trying to dilate.

If you are not dilating by week 7 or 8, contact the radiation therapist or nurse.

If your chemotherapy has been delayed because of low blood counts or if you have had complications, ask your doctor or nurse practitioner when you can start dilating. They may direct you to not begin dilating until they give you the go ahead to do so.

Continue to have pelvic exams into the future unless you have been told otherwise.

Please take the time to watch the teaching video and read the booklet “Use of Vaginal Dilators Following Radiation Therapy to the Pelvis” to learn about this important part of your recovery.

To watch and listen to this teaching video, you can type this full link into your internet browser search bar:

- <https://vimeo.com/showcase/4902954/video/547927391>

This video is 41 minutes long. You can press pause to watch at your pace, take notes or replay it any time you need. As you are watching the video, write down any questions you have and bring them to your next appointment.

Please contact your radiation nurse or radiation therapist if you have trouble finding this video online. If you need this information in another language, please let us know and we will provide a translator.

If you are having trouble dilating (especially if it is after 8 weeks since finishing your radiation), if you need guidance, or can't find the right dilators or lubrication, contact the radiation nurse or radiation therapist in the radiation department where you received your treatment. You may need to leave a message and we will return your call as soon as possible.

To contact your radiation oncology team regarding questions about vaginal dilation,

Halifax, please call **902-473-6067**

Cape Breton, please call **902-567-8100**

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Please do not use perfumed products. Thank you!*

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