

# Improving Sexual Health: Vaginal Lubricants, Moisturizers, Dilators & Counseling

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Lubricants and moisturizers are effective in relieving pain during intercourse for many women.

If you have more severe vaginal dryness and related pain, or if lubricants and moisturizers don't work well for you, see your health care provider as other options are available.

## How do vaginal lubricants work?

Vaginal lubricants work by reducing the friction associated with thin, dry genital tissue. Lubricants come in liquid or gel form and are applied to the vagina and vulva right before intercourse; it can also be helpful to apply them to the penis or any body part/instrument inserted into the vagina.

Some lubricants have glycerin and others are glycerin free. We recommend that you **avoid glycerin, flavored lubricants, and warming/tingling lubricants** since they may cause irritation. Glycerin is unhealthy for anyone with diabetes or at risk for diabetes.

Lubricants are absorbed into the skin, are immediate-acting, and provide temporary relief from vaginal dryness and related pain during intercourse. Lubricants are available either as **water-based, silicone-based, or oil-based** products.

- **Water-based lubricants** — have the advantage of being non-staining and they wash off fairly easily. If you are concerned about staining your sheets, place a large bath or beach towel on top of your sheets.
- **Oil-based lubricants** — may make condoms less effective. We **do not recommend oil-based lubricants** (such as petroleum jelly and baby oil) because they can cause vaginal irritation.

- **Silicone lubricants** — are often good options, particularly because they last longer and may not need to be re-applied.

**DO NOT** use silicone lubricants with other products made with silicone, such as sexual “toys” like vibrators. The lubricant may cause damage to the other product.

A list of lubricants available in drug and grocery stores, as well as on-line, can be found later in this document. (See pages 4 – 6.)

### **What are vaginal moisturizers?**

Vaginal moisturizers are products that are intended to ease vaginal dryness. They need to be used regularly to maintain moisture (up to three times a week). They are absorbed into the skin, increasing moisture in the affected area. Moisturizers may not provide enough comfort during intercourse, so lubricants may still be needed.

One of the downsides of vaginal moisturizers is that they are messy. Because the vagina absorbs what it needs and excretes the rest, you may want to wear a panty-liner to catch the remaining moisturizer. A list of moisturizers can be found later in this document. (See pages 6 – 7.)

Lubricants and moisturizers will not protect you against pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

### **Can I use a spermicidal gel as a lubricant?**

While lubricating, spermicidal gels should not be used during oral sex. Some women also experience irritation when they are used externally on the vulva.

### **What is a vaginal dilator?**

Dilators (sometimes called “vaginal trainers”) are used by some women to slowly and gently stretch the vaginal tissue and help with vaginal muscle relaxation. Dilators come in several sizes and are made of plastic or silicone.

You need to use a lubricant with your dilator. Many women find slow, progressive vaginal dilation a helpful way to return to intercourse. For a list of dilators, see pages 7 – 8.

### **What kind of lubricant should I use with a condom?**

Many women of child-bearing age use condoms to help prevent pregnancy. In addition, latex condoms help prevent the spread of sexually transmitted infections and HIV.

- **USE** water-based, silicone lubricants, spermicidal gels with latex or polyurethane condoms.
- **DO NOT** use oil-based lubricants with condoms.

Oil-based lubricants such as baby oil and Vaseline® can weaken condoms causing tears or disintegration. It is best to buy non-lubricated condoms and apply your own lubricant. Many different types of condoms are available:

- **Latex** – must be used with water or silicone based lubricant.
- **Polyurethane** – latex free, thinner and stronger, less constricting fit.
- **Non-latex polyisoprene** – higher sensitivity, without latex.
- **Female condoms, Nitrile FC2 (synthetic rubber)** – available in latex-free material.
- **Natural lamb** – does not protect against sexually transmitted infections. These condoms only help to prevent pregnancy.

## **Is there counseling for sexual health and enrichment at the University of Michigan?**

The Center for Sexual Health at the University of Michigan is a great resource for patients who would like more information or help with sexual enrichment. Visit their website at:

<https://www.uofmhealth.org/conditions-treatments/sexual-health>

Below is a list of lubricants that are widely available in drug and grocery stores.

### **Common lubricants for intercourse**

Astroglide® and Astroglide Glycerin and Paraben Free®	Is a long-lasting light lubricant that is odorless and flavorless. It is water soluble. Many like it because it is long-lasting and it does not become “stringy”. Found at local grocery and drug stores.  Astroglide® also comes glycerin and paraben free (Astroglide Glycerin and Paraben Free®).
I-D Millennium®	Is a silicone lubricant. Water-proof. Very slippery in texture. Can also be used as massage oil.
K-Y Jelly®	Is considered an all-purpose lubricant that many people have found helpful with a “medium” degree of thickness.  Others say it dries out too fast and gets “gummy”. Contains glycerin.
KY Gel®	Is preferred by some as less sticky than K-Y Jelly. Contains sorbitol, a sugar alcohol.
Liquid Silk®	Is glycerin-free and odorless. It has a lotion-like feel. Can be used as a moisturizer.

### Common lubricants for intercourse (cont.)

Lubrin®	Is a suppository that many post-menopausal women find to be a helpful lubricant because it is inserted into the vagina.  Some women say it is almost too much lubricant.
Maximus®	Is thick in texture like a lotion. Natural feeling and long lasting.
Pre-Seed®	Fertility-friendly lubricant. Glycerin-free. Will not limit or harm sperm. Recommended by fertility experts.
Probe Silky Light®	Is gentle and paraben-free. This is a good lubricant for those who have sensitivities.
Slippery Stuff Gel®	Is a glycerin-free, flavorless, thicker lubricant.
Sliquid®	Silicone, water-based varieties and hybrids. No glycerin or parabens.
Surgilube®	Water soluble, contains propylene glycol, and is latex compatible.
Sylk®	Plant-based, pH balanced. Safe to use with condoms. Paraben free.

You can also buy lubricants online at the following sites:

- <https://www.amazon.com/>
- <https://www.babeland.com/>
- <https://www.goodvibes.com/s/>

### Hypoallergenic lubricants – organic and chemical free

Pink®	Made with water and aloe extract, washes off easily. Glycerin and paraben free, good slipperiness. Can also be used as a moisturizer.
Just Like Me®	Made by Pure Romance, pH balanced, safe for latex condoms.
Good Clean Love® (Almost Naked)	Certified organic, paraben and glycerin-free. Advertises as carbon neutral.

### Moisturizers

Extra Virgin Olive Oil (natural)	<p>Can be used as a moisturizer by placing on finger and rubbing into the vaginal canal. Do not use other food oils as they can trap bacteria.</p> <p><b>Do NOT</b> use with latex condoms as they weaken the condom, cause tears, and can cause disintegration of the condom.</p>
Vitamin E Oil (natural)	<p>Can be used as a suppository. Pure vitamin E oil is available in bottle form or capsule form. If you use the capsules, break them open and apply to the vaginal canal. You can apply vitamin E oil one or more times a day.</p> <p><b>Do NOT</b> use with latex condoms as they weaken the condom, cause tears, and can cause disintegration of the condom.</p>

## Moisturizers (cont.)

Coconut Oil (natural)	<p>Coconut oil can be used on the outside of the vaginal entrance and just inside the edge. Coconut oil is good for rejuvenating dry, irritated tissues and for keeping vaginal dryness at bay. Coconut oil should be pure, without other oils or additives.</p> <p><b>DO NOT</b> use with latex condoms as they weaken the condom, cause tears, and can cause disintegration of the condom.</p>
<p><b>If</b> you are prone to urinary tract infections, yeast infections, or have diabetes, you may not be able to use natural oils.</p>	
Luvena®	A vaginal moisturizer that can be found at your local drug store. It is hormone, glycerin and paraben free.
Replens®	<p>Estrogen free. Good for post-menopause or after medical treatments (such as chemotherapy and hormone therapy) that dry the vagina. This moisturizer is inserted into the vagina with an applicator 1-3 times per week.</p> <p>Women who choose not to use or cannot use localized estrogen replacement to the vagina often use Replens.</p>

## Dilators

Vaginismus <a href="https://vaginismus.com/">https://vaginismus.com/</a>	Offers reasonable priced set of 6 hard plastic dilators in graduated sizes with attachable handle for ease of insertion.
Pure Romance <a href="https://www.pureromance.com">https://www.pureromance.com</a>	Offers flexible dilator sets in various sizes.

## Dilators (cont.)

CooperSurgical <a href="https://www.coopersurgical.com">https://www.coopersurgical.com</a>	Milex dilators are flexible, silicone dilators in graduated sizes.
CMT (Current Medical Technologies) <a href="https://www.cmtmedical.com/">https://www.cmtmedical.com/</a>	Syracuse Medical Devices vaginal dilators are medical grade, non-latex, rigid plastic dilators. Seven graduated sizes are available.

For more information on sexual enrichment aids, visit these websites:

- <https://www.amazon.com>
- <https://www.babeland.com/>
- <https://www.bedsider.org/>
- <http://www.erotica-readers.com>
- <https://www.goodvibes.com/s/>
- <http://www.ohmibod.com>

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Author: Mieke Beckman, LMSW, CST  
Reviewers: Kelly Scheu, NP

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