

Anal dilatation at home

Why do I need anal dilatation?

Anal dilatations are carried out to prevent the anal opening from becoming smaller. Anal dilators slowly stretch the anus. They are done either following your surgery or resulting from an assessment made by your surgeon after a rectal examination. Your surgeon will explain how often and for how long these dilatations will need to be followed. This can range from a few weeks to six or seven months.

Your surgeon or the Colorectal Clinical Nurse Specialist will teach you the procedure. Before you go home, a nurse will demonstrate it to you.

I am having dilatations because of:

- ☐ Anorectal surgery (following surgery wait until your surgeon advises you to re- start dilatations)
- ☐ A diagnosis of anal stenosis

I have been told that dilatation will be necessary:

- ☐ Once a week
- ☐ Twice a week
- ☐ Other (every.....)

How to carry out anal dilatation

You will need:

- The dilator supplied by the hospital
- Water soluble lubricant (such as a KY jelly)
- Soap and water for cleaning the dilator when you have finished.

Find a consistent time to do the dilatation and make it part of your routine.



Instructions

1. Wash your hands
2. Apply water soluble lubricant to the end of the dilator
3. Position yourself on your back or side so you can comfortably reach your anus
4. Holding the dilator, so the lubricated end goes first, apply gentle pressure until the dilator passes into your anus
5. Insert the dilator up to approximately 2-3cm (1-1 ½ inches). Try to keep the dilator in for 30 to 60 seconds
6. Remove the dilator
7. Clean and dry your anal area
8. Wash the dilator with soap and water
9. Wash your hands with soap and water.

Tips to make the procedure more comfortable

- Hold the dilator under warm running water to warm it up. The cold metal can cause some discomfort due to the temperature change.
- Do the anal dilatation at the same time each the day. This can help you to accept it as part of your routine.

Common questions about anal dilatation

I noticed some bleeding following dilatation – is this normal?

Some bleeding is normal following anal dilatation, however this should be no more than a few drops and be immediately following the dilatation. This spotting should stop over a week or two. You should contact your surgeon or specialist nurse if the bleeding persists, does not stop over a few weeks or appears as a 'trickle' coming from the anal opening.

Do the dilatations hurt?

Although the dilatations might not be comfortable, they should not require regular pain relief.

Contact details

If you have any questions or concerns about this procedure, please contact your specialist nurse on 0207 8118108.

Alternatively, please call:

The Royal Marsden Macmillan Hotline 020 8915 6899
(available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

