

What is vaginismus?

Vaginismus occurs when the muscles in the vagina tighten when something enters the vagina (penis, tampon, getting a pap, menstrual cups, etc). This muscle tightening can then cause **pain or discomfort with anything in the vagina**.

Why is this happening?

The muscle tightening is an **involuntary** response which means it's not done on purpose. The muscle tightening often occurs as a response to previous **pain or fear**.

What is primary vs. secondary vaginismus?

Primary vaginismus means that there has always been pain with anything in the vagina (e.g., first tampon use, first sexual intercourse).

Secondary vaginismus occurs when there is no pain with things in the vagina at first, but then pain develops over time.

What causes vaginismus?

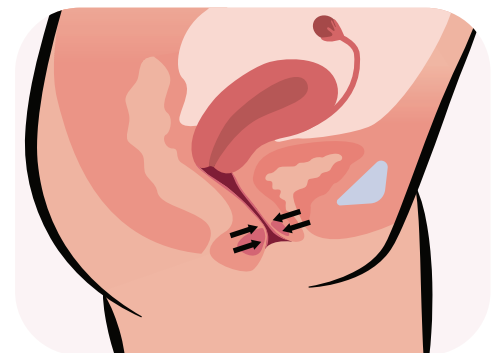
The cause of vaginismus is **unknown**. Some factors that might contribute include having pain along the opening of the vagina (vulvar vestibulitis), recurrent bladder infections, yeast infections, fear that anything entering the vagina might be painful, previous abuse or trauma, injury during childbirth, etc. In many cases, no specific cause is found.

Can vaginismus get better?

It takes time and effort but **many people with vaginismus improve** dramatically with treatment. There is often no quick fix but becoming pain free again often occurs. Even with vaginismus, many people still have satisfying sexual relationships by engaging in sexual activity other than intercourse.



Typical
Vaginal Canal
Opening



Vaginismus
Vaginal Canal
Opening

What are the treatments of vaginismus?

Common therapies include pelvic floor **physiotherapy** and the use of vaginal **dilators or stretching**, special **breathing** techniques and learning how to relax the pelvic floor muscles, **cognitive behavioural therapy** and **sex therapy**. Sometimes women need more than one type of therapy and the time involved to improve varies between women.



Any underlying medical conditions that may be contributing to pain should be treated.