



VAGINISMUS

What is vaginismus?

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

Why is this happening?

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

What is primary versus secondary vaginismus?

Primary vaginismus means that there has always been pain/ tightness with anything in the vagina (such as first tampon use, first sexual intercourse). Secondary vaginismus occurs when there has been no pain/ tightness with things in the vagina 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 (vestibulodynia), 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.

What are the treatments for 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.

Can vaginismus get better?

It takes time and effort, but many women with vaginismus improve dramatically with treatment. There is often no quick fix, but becoming pain free again without vaginal tightening often occurs. Even with vaginismus, many women still have satisfying sexual relationships by engaging in sexual activity other than intercourse.

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