**Vaginismus 101: What you need to know about this condition which makes sex painful**

A condition which leads to involuntary spasms of the vagina muscles, vaginismus can complicate sex lives of women

Vaginismus… sounds scary right? Neither a [vaginal infection](https://www.healthshots.com/intimate-health/feminine-hygiene/this-is-the-only-guide-youll-ever-need-to-combat-vaginal-yeast-infections/) nor an affliction related to the menstrual cycle, vaginismus is actually an involuntary spasm of the vaginal muscles when something enters the vagina. Needless to say that it can make sexual intercourse a complicated affair for women from this condition.

It can happen during or just before sexual intercourse when the penis is about to penetrate the vagina. But the discomfort of vaginismus can also extend to the insertion of menstrual hygiene products like tampons and menstrual cups. It can even happen during a gynaecologist’s check up.

The severity of vaginismus is variable. And stress and anxiety are usually associated with this condition.

**What are the symptoms of vaginismus?**
Well, usually the first symptom of vaginismus is painful sex or painful attempted penetration. You may enjoy foreplay, followed by sudden pain and fear at the time of penetration. Lack of sexual desire and fear are usually associated with this condition.

**But what causes this condition?**
While there is no direct cause, in some cases vaginismus might be linked to past sexual abuse or painful intercourse.

**Here are the different types of vaginismus**
Primary: Where vaginal penetration has never happened.
Secondary: Where vaginal penetration has been achieved in the past but is not possible now. This can happen after gynaecological surgeries and trauma.

**What is the treatment for vaginismus?**
Vaginismus can interfere with relationships and cause stress, anxiety, feeling of inadequacy, low self-esteem, and a dysfunctional family life. If you have vaginismus, you should seek medical help.

A gynae examination is crucial to rule out other conditions with similar manifestations like pelvic inflammatory disease. During your gynae’s appointment, your doctor will take a detailed sexual history and do a gentle pelvic examination to rule out any physical problems.

Sex therapy and counselling are an integral part of the treatment of vaginismus. Understanding your anatomy and being familiar with your body helps. K[egel exercises](https://www.healthshots.com/intimate-health/feminine-hygiene/calling-all-women-with-bursting-bladders-these-kegel-exercises-will-help-you-take-control/) are a great way to identify the vaginal muscles. These exercises are repeated contraction and relaxation of your pelvic floor muscles, that is muscles which control the urinary bladder, vagina, and rectum.

An easy way to identify these muscles is trying to stop the urine flow and observing the muscles involved. These exercises can be done at home easily and will give you control over your vaginal muscles.

**Finger therapy can help with the condition**
Try to insert a finger (after washing your hands) in the vagina and do Kegel’s. This can slowly be increased to a two-finger insertion. And gradually you can start using tampons during periods.

You can also use vaginal dilators which can help stretch the vaginal muscles.
Relaxation techniques like meditation can help decrease anxiety and stress.
Couple sessions with a sex therapist can go a long way in sorting out things with your partner.