

# VAGINISMUS



# What is it vaginismus?

Why is this  
happening?

What is primary  
versus secondary  
vaginismus?

What causes  
vaginismus?

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

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.

Primary vaginismus means that there has always been pain/ tightness with anything in the vagina (such as first tampon use or the first sexual intercourse). Secondary vaginismus occurs when there has been no pain/ tightness with things in the vagina but then pain develops over time.

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 of pain, 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 the vaginismus varies between women. All women with suspected vaginismus should be evaluated for vulvodynia/ vestibulodynia.