Radiation for gynecologic cancer can cause some shrinkage and dryness of the vagina as the tissues heal. Shrinkage may hinder the health care provider’s ability to perform follow-up exams. It is important to gently stretch the vagina two to three times per week.

Regular sexual intercourse is one way to avoid vaginal shrinkage. You can resume sexual activity when it is comfortable (usually within two to three weeks after you complete radiation therapy). Your vagina may be dry or tender. If so, use a lubricant such as K-Y Jelly® or Replens® during sexual intercourse.

Begin vaginal dilation about two weeks after you finish radiation treatment. If you have any concerns, talk with your health care provider.

Using the Dilator

1. Wash the dilator with hot, soapy water and rinse it well.
2. Lie down with your knees bent and apart.
3. Put a water-soluble lubricating jelly such as K-Y Jelly® on the round end of the dilator. Do not use oil-based lubricants such as Vaseline®.
4. Separate your labia, and with firm, gentle pressure put the rounded end into your vagina as far as it will go.
5. Leave the dilator in place for two to three minutes to stretch the vagina and then remove it. Repeat this two more times.
6. Wash the dilator again with hot, soapy water and rinse it well when you are finished.