

Let's Talk About...

Anal Dilation

What is anal dilation?

Anal [AY-nal] **dilation** [dy-LAY-shun] is the process of opening up or stretching the anus using small plastic dilators. This is a treatment used to enlarge a surgically repaired or rebuilt anus. You will do this at home.

Why does my child need it?

Your child may need anal dilation if they had surgery for an imperforate anus. After surgical repair, the anal opening can become tight. If the anus is not dilated, it can scar, become narrow, and stay that way. This would prevent your child from having normal bowel movements.

How is anal dilation done?

After your child's surgery, a healthcare provider will teach you how to do anal dilation during a follow up visit at the clinic. You will start with the smallest dilator and increase 1 size per week (see instructions at right.) You'll do this until the largest dilator passes easily through the anus.

After the anus is the right size, you will do dilations less often. Once you have reached the final dilator size, follow the dilation taper schedule on page 2.

If you don't increase the dilator size every week as instructed, the anus may stay small and it may become very hard to dilate to normal size. If the dilation is difficult, painful, or bloody, you will need to call your healthcare provider.

Instructions for anal dilation

- 1 Gather your supplies:
 - Dilators in correct sizes
 - Water-based lubricant
 - Someone to help you hold and position your child
- 2 Put your child on their back and bring their knees to their chest. This exposes the perineum. You may need another person to help hold the legs of your child.
- 3 Put lubricant on the end of the dilator.
- 4 Gently put the dilator in the anus. Twist and slowly push the dilator into the rectum. You may feel some resistance as the muscles tighten.
- 5 Little by little, insert the dilator slowly through the ring of resistance as your child's surgeon showed you. **Do not insert the dilator past the notch or handle on the dilator.**
- 6 Leave the dilator in the anus for 30 seconds and then remove it gently.
- 7 When finished, clean the dilator with soap and water.
- 8 Do anal dilation 2 times each day, in the morning and at night.

Each week, change the dilator to the next size, as instructed. Do dilations 2 times a day until the anus is the right size for your child. The surgeon can then close your child's colostomy, if needed.

How long will I have to give my child anal dilations?

You will need to perform dilations for 7 to 8 months after your child's surgery. See the dilator goal size table to understand the best size of the dilator your child's age. This table is a guide for what dilator size is normal, but this may be different for your child.

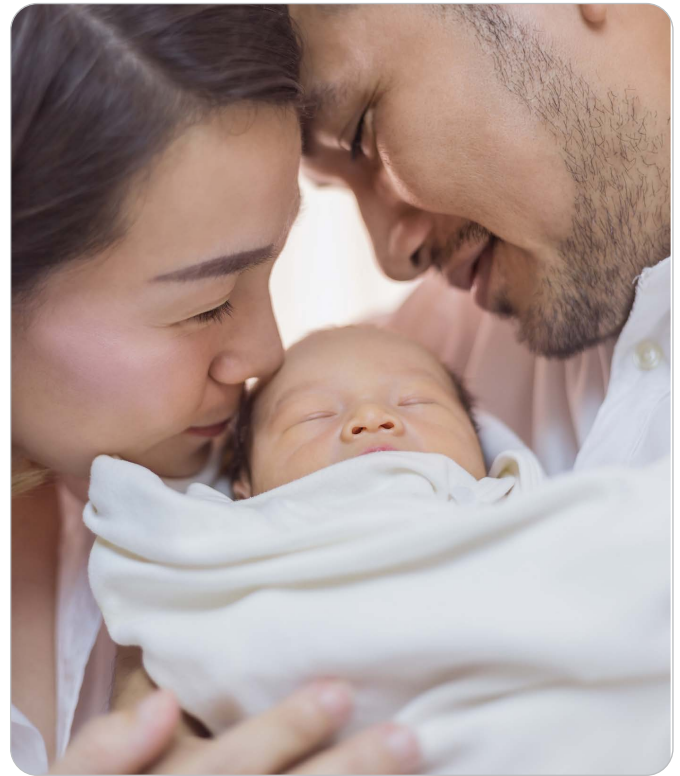
Dilator goal size

Child's age	Dilator size
1–4 months	12
4–12 months	13
8–12 months	14
1–3 years	15
3–12 years	16
12 years and older	17

After the anus is the right size, you will perform dilations less often. Once you have reached the final dilator size, follow the dilation taper schedule.

Dilation taper schedule

Frequency (how often)	Duration (how long)
Every day	1 month
Every other day	1 month
Twice a week	1 month
Once a week	1 month
Once a month	3 months



Does anal dilation hurt?

Anal dilations can be uncomfortable, but are not extremely painful.

When should I call the surgeon?

Call your child's surgeon if you have any questions about anal dilation. **Call right away if you see bright red bleeding that does not stop when using a dilator.** A small amount of blood on the dilator or in the diaper is normal as you increase to the next size.

