

Anal Dilation- Home Management

Call 911 or an ambulance if your child:

- Struggles to take each breath
- Grunts with each breath
- Is unable to speak or cry
- Has blue or white lips or nails

Call the doctor night or day if your child has any of the following symptoms:

- Redness, green drainage, or swelling to incision area.
- Is limp or very weak.
- Cries uncontrollably for more than an hour.
- Is confused, has behavior changes, or has had a seizure.
- Has a temperature over 101° F (38.4°C).
- Is less than 3 months old and has a temperature over 100.3 °F (38.0°C)
- Is an infant and has no wet diapers in 8 hours.
- Has no urine in 12 hours at any age.
- Is crying without tears.
- Seems more sleepy than usual.
- Has a dry mouth or cracked lips.

Anal dilation (also called Hegar dilations) may be needed for your child. Your child's surgeon may feel that it is needed after doing a rectal exam. They are usually used for ano-rectal malformations, imperforate anus, after pull-through procedures, after PSARP procedures, or Hirschsprung disease. Dilations mean passing a desired size dilator through the anus as instructed by your surgeon.

How does it Work?

- Dilations stop the anal opening from becoming smaller by slowly stretching the anus with a tool called a Hegar Dilator. Your surgeon will tell you how often and how long to do these dilations.
- There are several sizes of the Hegar dilator or plastic dilator. The size of the Hegar dilator will increase weekly to every couple of weeks.
- You will get written instructions and a schedule that tells you what to do each week. Teaching will be done by the surgeon, nurse practitioner, or surgery nurse.

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What Supplies Will I Need?

- The Hegar Dilator or plastic dilator given to you by St. Louis Children's Hospital.
- Water soluble lubricant.
- Soap and water to clean the dilator after use.
- Gauze or a wash cloth

What are the Steps for Anal Dilation?

1. Wash your hands with soap and water.
2. Find an extra person to help hold your child. If anal dilations are still new to you, it might make you more comfortable to have help.
3. Apply the water soluble lubricant to the end of the dilator.
4. Place your child comfortably on their back or side, in order to expose the anus. Bring his/her knees to their chest.
5. Take the Hegar dilator and hold it like a pencil. Apply gentle pressure on the anus until it passes inside.
6. Put the dilator inside about 2 to 3 cm (or to the marked area on the dilator).
7. Keep the dilator in place for 30 seconds.
8. Remove the Hegar dilator.
9. Clean your child with baby wipes or soap and water.
10. Hold your child to calm if upset.
11. Wash the dilator with soap and water.
12. Wash your hands with soap and water.
13. Continue to follow the schedule given to you on how often to use the dilator and the recommended size.

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Frequently Asked Questions:

Is bleeding normal after dilation?

- Some bleeding is normal after dilation, but should only be a few drops right afterward. The bleeding should stop after the first 1 to 2 weeks of dilations. Bleeding may happen again for a few days after increasing the size of the dilators.
- Return to the St. Louis Children's Hospital Emergency Room if there is a large amount of bleeding, persistent bleeding, or bleeding that continues past 2 weeks.

Does the dilation hurt?

- Although dilation can be uncomfortable, your child should not need regular pain medicines.
- A few days to a week after increasing the size of the dilators the pain usually stops. Please contact your child's surgeon if at any time during the process, the dilations become difficult or your child seems to be in more pain than normal.

What do I do with my Hegar Dilator when my child is scheduled for a clinic visit?

- Always bring your Hegar dilator with you to every surgery clinic appointment and/or surgery.
- There are different sizes, and your surgeon may decide to change to a new size.

What do I do when my child is finished with dilations?

- Please return the dilators to the clinic when your child is finished with dilations.

For General Health Information and Resources:

Call or visit the [Family Resource Center](#), a health information library on the 3rd floor of the hospital. Call 314.454.2350, email at frc@bjc.org, or check out the FREE [St. Louis Children's Hospital Kid Care App](#).

