

## VAGINISMUS

### What is it?

Vaginismus is an involuntary spasm or contraction of the muscles around the vaginal opening. No specific age group of women is more likely to experience this. When this occurs, intercourse may be painfully impossible as well as the insertion of a tampon, a diaphragm or a speculum for a pelvic exam. The cause could be psychological because of hostility and anger, anxiety, fear, a dislike of sex, stress or something subconscious and not obvious. There may have been a previously bad sexual experience such as rape, incest, sexual abuse or perhaps sexual stimulation was inadequate. Other causes include vaginal infection, intact hymen or allergic reaction. This problem can be very emotionally traumatic to an individual if not addressed causing guilt, increased anxiety, low self-esteem, and relationship problems.

### Treatment:

- \* Pelvic examination with help rule out other physical problems. You may need to be sedated for this.
- \* Your physician will take a thorough sexual history. It is important to be as honest as possible and not leave anything out even if you are embarrassed.
- \* Gradual dilation of the vaginal opening with rubber or glass dilators to treat the muscle spasms may be used. More than one office visit may be necessary as well as self-treatment at home.
- \* Sitting in a tub of hot water for 10 to 15 minutes before a dilation treatment at home or before sexual intercourse will help relax the muscles.
- \* Counseling may be recommended.
- \* Use a water-soluble lubricant such as K-Y jelly before intercourse.
- \* Sedatives or anxiolytic agents may be prescribed for a short time period.