

Vaginal Steams for Vulvar/Vaginal Health and to Decrease Pain

Many of my patients swear by their vaginal steams and get great results with them. They experience less pain with sitting, have easier penetration, and are able to perform their vaginal stretches and insert dilators with more ease. I recommend doing vaginal steams on a weekly basis and even more often during painful flare-ups. Vaginal steams heat the pelvic floor muscles and help reduce tightness and muscle spasms. Vaginal steams should be avoided during your menstrual period or during pregnancy. I recently treated a woman with a 10-year history of vaginismus. She had graduated to the largest dilator after several months of therapy, but was still experiencing pain and difficulty with its insertion. I recommended that she do a vaginal steam right before her dilator work. The following week she came to my office and was joyous. After her vaginal steam, she was able to insert the largest dilator without any problems. She said, "The dilator went right in, and I also had so much less pain with insertion."

Vaginal steams were taught to me by Dr. Rosita Arvigo, naturopathic doctor, renowned herbalist and Mayan healer. She has brought Maya Abdominal Massage to the United States and runs a great advanced certification program in Belize which I've completed. I find that many of the techniques of the Maya massage are essential for pelvic pain sufferers. The Arvigo Maya Abdominal Massage™ helps to realign the pelvic organs and decreases pelvic congestion by bringing healing energy and blood flow to the pelvic organs and pelvic floor muscles. With vaginal steams, you can mix and match the herbs and flowers you use depending on your condition. Consult a local herbalist before attempting to do a steam with herbs. Start your search on the web by checking out www.ArvisoMassage.com. You can also just start out with plain steamed water for the vaginal steams and still get results.

Vaginal Steam Instructions

1. Boil a gallon of water for 10 minutes and then let it steep with the herbs for 5 minutes with the lid on the pot.
2. Place water under a chair with open slits, or better yet place the bowl with the herbs into the toilet. Don't pour the steam solution into the toilet. Instead, put the whole pot into the toilet. Be careful as it might be too hot when you sit. If it feels too hot, you can also buy a raised toilet seat to avoid burns from the steam to the vulvar area/PFM.
3. Sit on the toilet and let the steam penetrate the PFMs via the vagina. If the steam is too hot, stand up and wait for it to cool down before sitting down again.
4. Wrap yourself in a blanket, put on socks, and make sure to avoid drafts while you are doing the steam. Sit down until all the steam has evaporated, about 15 to 20 minutes.
5. While sitting on the toilet, perform a reverse Kegel so that the pelvic muscles are evenly heated and relaxed. The steam introduces heat into the pelvic muscles, helping them to relax and reduce spasms of the pelvic floor muscles.
6. Add to your vaginal steam water a mixture of dry flower and herbs. Dr. Arvigo has made a wonderful healing remedy for vaginal steams, using herbs and flowers like basil, oregano, calendula flowers and lavender.
7. After the vaginal steam, massage the vaginal muscles. This is also a great time to insert your dilator and rest in bed under warm sheets. Do your best after a steam to keep your body at a constant warm temperature for 24 hours, avoiding sudden drafts that might give you a chill.

8. Work with a local herbalist to see which flower/herb mixture might be the best for the specifics of your condition. See the following table for herbs and their uses. You will need one quart of the herbs if you are using fresh herbs and one cup if using dry herbs.

Herbs That Can Be Used in Your Vaginal Steams

Note: This list is for educational purposes only. You must consult your physician or herbalist before using any of these herbs in a vaginal steam. These herbs should not be taken by pregnant and lactating women unless prescribed by your caregiver. The information in this table comes from www.mountainroseherbs.com.

Calendula	Helps to reduce pain naturally. Its antibacterial, anti-inflammatory, antifungal, and immunostimulant properties help treat slow-healing cuts. It soothes irritated, burning skin and also helps to stimulate collagen synthesis.
Basil	Helps restore immune function deficiency caused by stress. It also has antibacterial properties and helps other herbs penetrate the skin.
Motherwort	Helps with menstrual tension by acting as a uterine tonic. This herb has antibacterial, antifungal, antispasmodic, antiviral, and antiseptic properties.
Oregano	This herb has antispasmodic, antiviral, and antiseptic properties.
Rosemary	Has antioxidant, antiseptic, and antispasmodic properties. Helps to stop yeast from growing and helps to remove yeast cells from the urinary tract. Stimulates menstrual flow. Avoid this herb if your flow is already heavy.
St. John's Wort	Helps relieve pain. Should not be used together with Monoamine Oxidase Inhibitors (MAOIs) or Protease Inhibitors (PIs). Also helps to slow down frequent urination, and can treat throbbing pain of any origin.
Chamomile	Helps stop spasms in the smooth muscles and contains anti-inflammatory, antibacterial, antiviral, and antiparasitic properties.
Red Clover	Helps reduce pain associated with menstrual periods. Helps promote healing of skin wounds and reduces the effects of PMS and menopause. Avoid this herb if you are taking a blood thinner.

Marshmallow Root Relieves irritation by coating inflamed surfaces; relieves vulva, perineal, and vestibular inflammation.

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