The Painful Sex Toolkit

A practical guide to more comfortable, less painful sex

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Everything here is educational, not medical advice or diagnosis. If pain is persistent or severe, please check in with a pelvic floor physical therapist or doctor.

Start here

If sex hurts, you've probably been told to just relax or have a glass of wine. Neither one is a plan.

This guide is the plan. I'm a Doctor of Physical Therapy who spent 8 years treating pelvic pain in the clinic, and these are the tools I come back to again and again.

How to use this guide

1. Read "Why sex can hurt" so the tools make sense.
2. Find your pain type.
3. Start with the base layer. It's for everyone.
4. Add the tools that match your pain type.
5. Follow the weekly rhythm at the end.

You don't need to buy anything to begin. The first practices use only your breath, your jaw, and your attention.

Check in with a provider first if

- Your pain is new, or suddenly worse.
- You have bleeding, unusual discharge, sores, or a fever.
- Your pain started after childbirth, surgery, or menopause and hasn't been evaluated.

Why sex can hurt

Your pelvic floor. This is a group of muscles at the base of your pelvis. They surround the vaginal opening and support your bladder, bowel, and uterus. Like any muscle, they can hold tension.

Your nervous system. When your body senses a threat, including the memory of past pain, those muscles tighten to protect you. This is called guarding. It happens automatically, and it makes penetration hurt more, which teaches your body to guard even harder next time.

So two things need to change together. The muscles need to learn to let go, and your nervous system needs to feel safe enough to let them. Every tool in this guide works on one or both.

Why the jaw is in a guide about sex. The jaw and the pelvic floor tend to clench together. Many people with pelvic pain also hold tension in their jaw, and softening one often helps the other soften. The jaw is also easy to reach, which makes it a great place to start.

Find your pain type

Sharp / entry pain

Burning, stinging, or sharp pain right at the opening as penetration begins. Tampons and pelvic exams often feel the same way.

Deep / aching pain

Pain or a deep ache that shows up with deeper penetration. It may be worse in certain positions and can linger afterward.

Gripping / tearing pain

A feeling of hitting a wall, or muscles clamping down so nothing fits. It can feel like tightness, pulling, or tearing.

You may recognize more than one. Start with the one that shows up most often.

NO EQUIPMENT NEEDED

What you can do today

Jaw release Unclench. Let your tongue rest off the roof of your mouth.	**Long exhale** Breathe in for a count of 4, out for a count of 6 to 8.
Orienting Name 3 things you can see, 2 you can hear, 1 you can feel under you.	**Notice, don't force** Get curious about tightness instead of pushing through it.

EXPAND YOUR WINDOW

Your nervous system

Your nervous system has a window of tolerance. That's the zone where you feel regulated, safe, and in control. Pleasurable sex happens inside that window. These practices help widen it, so more of life, and more of sex, fits inside.

- **Slow down before touch starts.** Give your nervous system time to catch up.
- **Orient to your space.** Name what you see, hear, and feel under you.
- **Keep your jaw soft.** An unclenched jaw signals safety to your whole system.
- **Lengthen your exhale.** Longer exhales activate your vagus nerve, the main nerve of your rest and digest system, and shift you toward calm.
- **Move your body daily.** Gentle movement helps discharge stress before it builds up.
- **Stay in connection.** Checking in out loud with your partner keeps your system online.
- **Protect your basics.** Sleep, food, and rest all widen your window.

With a wider window, you can still get activated. You just have more room to feel it and come back to safety.

THE BASE LAYER

Always in your toolkit

Use these four every time you practice, no matter which pain type is yours.

Breathwork

A long exhale activates your vagus nerve and shifts your body into its rest and digest state. That's the state arousal and muscle release depend on. Making your exhale longer than your inhale is the fastest way to nudge your body toward safety in the moment.

Jaw releases

- **Tongue stretch.** Stick your tongue out and down, and hold gently.
- **Masseter release, inside the cheek.** The masseter is your main chewing muscle, the one that bulges in your cheek when you clench. With clean hands, gently massage it from inside your cheek.
- **Masseter release, outside.** Drag your knuckles with light pressure from the jaw joint, just in front of your ear, down to the angle of your jaw.
- **Temporalis compression and rotate.** The temporalis is the fan shaped muscle at your temples. Place your hands on your temples, apply gentle compression, then slowly rotate.

Pelvic openers

- **Happy baby.** Opens the hips and inner thighs.
- **Child's pose.** Gently stretches the low back and pelvic floor.
- **Figure four.** Releases the outer hip and glute.
- **Deep squat.** Opens the pelvis and lengthens the pelvic floor.
- **Butterfly.** Opens the inner thighs and hips.

Watch the demos. Full video walkthroughs of these jaw releases and pelvic openers live on my YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/@Drinezg

Lubrication, every time

- Reduces friction, which lowers the chance of triggering sharp or gripping pain.
- Makes penetration more comfortable, regardless of arousal level.
- Supports comfort during dilator, wand, and toy use.
- Water based is safe with all toy materials. Silicone based lasts longer, but check that it's compatible with your product's material first.
- Skip oil based lubricant with latex condoms.

SHARP / ENTRY PAIN

Dilators

A dilator is a smooth, graduated tool that usually comes in a set of 6 to 8 increasing sizes. You use it to gently and gradually reintroduce comfortable touch and pressure at the vaginal opening. Think of it as a retraining tool for your muscles and nervous system.

GETTING STARTED

- Use a full graduated set, not a single size.
- Empty your bladder first, and find a private, unrushed space.
- Get comfortable. Many people start lying down, knees bent, with a pillow under the hips.

DURING YOUR SESSION

- Apply lubricant generously to both the dilator and the opening.
- Start with the smallest size, even if you think you can handle more.
- Insert slowly, only as far as feels comfortable.
- Breathe slowly the whole time. Holding your breath signals your body to guard.
- Hold at mild pressure, never pain, for 5 to 10 minutes.

PROGRESSING

- Move up only once the current size feels fully comfortable.
- Practice 3 to 5 times a week. Short and consistent beats long and occasional.
- If pain increases, drop back a size. That's a normal part of the process.
- Try the clock method. Picture the opening as a clock face and gently press the dilator toward different numbers to release tension all the way around.

Vibrator, external, low setting

Here the vibrator stays on the outside. Gentle vibration gives the area a new, pleasant sensation to process, which helps calm a nervous system that has learned to expect pain.

- Start on the lowest setting, external only.
- Let yourself notice pleasant sensation without needing more from it.
- Pair it with dilator practice to link this area with pleasure.
- There's no "should" here. Some sessions are just about noticing what feels good.

Want to go deeper on this? My full course, The Beginner's Guide to Vibrators, walks you through everything:
stan.store/dr_inezg/p/the-beginners-guide-to-vibrators

TOOLS BY PAIN TYPE

DEEP / ACHING PAIN

Slow pace for tenting

When the body has enough time and arousal, the vagina naturally lengthens and lifts, creating more room before deeper contact. This is called tenting. It takes time, and it doesn't happen if things move too fast.

- Extend foreplay past the point that feels "ready enough." Tenting happens late in arousal.
- Use manual or oral touch before penetration, and let that be the point instead of a warm up to rush through.
- If penetration starts and still feels deep or sharp, pause and return to external touch. Your body just needs more time.

Ohnut

Ohnut is a set of soft, stretchy rings worn at the base of a penis or toy. They let you control penetration depth directly, so contact doesn't reach past where your body is ready.

GETTING STARTED

- The set comes with 4 connected rings. Use as many or as few as you need.
- Rings can be worn on a penis, a toy, or fingers.
- Wash before first use. Use water based or silicone based lubricant. Skip oil based, which can break the rings down.

DURING USE

- Start with more rings than you think you'll need. You can always remove one.
- Slide rings off one at a time, mid session, as depth feels comfortable.
- No need to pause and talk through it every time. The rings do the adjusting for you.
- If deep pain shows up even with rings on, add a ring back or return to external touch.

WHY IT HELPS

- It handles a common driver of deep pain: contact reaching further than your body has had time to prepare for.
- It pairs well with slow pacing. Use tenting to build room, and Ohnut to make sure contact doesn't outpace it.

Deep pain that keeps showing up is worth getting evaluated, since conditions like endometriosis can cause it too.

GRIPPING / TEARING PAIN

Pelvic wand

A pelvic wand is an angled tool used internally to apply gentle, sustained pressure to trigger points, which are tight, tender spots in the pelvic floor muscles and vaginal walls. It reaches spots that are hard to access with fingers alone.

GETTING STARTED

- Empty your bladder, and find a private, unrushed space.
- Lie down comfortably, knees bent, hips relaxed.
- Use plenty of lubricant on the wand tip.

DURING YOUR SESSION

- Insert the shorter, angled end slowly and gently.
- Move slowly, feeling for points that are tender or tight. These are your trigger points.
- Apply gentle, sustained pressure and hold. Nothing deep or forceful.
- Breathe slowly through it. A dull ache is normal. Sharp pain is your cue to ease off.
- Hold each point 30 to 90 seconds, or until you feel a release or softening.

FREQUENCY

- 5 to 10 minutes, 3 to 4 times a week.
- Some soreness afterward is normal, like after a deep tissue massage. If pain is sharp or getting worse, stop and check in with a pelvic floor PT.

Reverse Kegels

A regular Kegel squeezes and lifts the pelvic floor. A reverse Kegel teaches it to actively lengthen and let go. It's a skill you can train.

- Inhale, and instead of squeezing, imagine gently bearing down or opening, like the very beginning of a yawn in your pelvic floor.
- Exhale and let it return to neutral, without clenching.
- Practice a few minutes daily. This improves with repetition.

Where to get your tools

Some of the links and codes below are affiliate links, which means I may earn a small commission at no extra cost to you. I only recommend products I use or trust.

DILATORS

Intimate Rose

Medical grade silicone, an 8 size graduated set, designed by a pelvic floor therapist.

www.intimaterose.com/pages/dilator-hub

PELVIC WAND

Intimate Rose

Their pelvic wand collection, built for trigger point release.

www.intimaterose.com/collections/pelvic-wands

VIBRATORS

VUSH

Use code **DRINEZVUSH** for 25% off.

OHNUT

The Pelvic People

Soft, wearable rings for depth control.

RED LIGHT THERAPY

Fringe

I personally use red light therapy for pelvic pain, and it's been a helpful addition to my own routine. Many people use it to support blood flow, ease muscle tension, and support tissue healing in the pelvic area. Use my link and code **DRINEZG10** for a discount.

fringeheals.com/?ref=INEZGONZALEZ

A SIMPLE WEEKLY RHYTHM

Your starter program

Consistency over intensity. Small and often rewires faster than long and occasional.

PRACTICE	FREQUENCY	TIME
Jaw + breath practice	Daily	2 minutes
Dilator, wand, or self-touch practice	3x / week	5 to 10 minutes
Pressure-free pleasure exploration	1x / week	No time limit

A REMINDER

Healing isn't linear.

The goal is teaching your body it's safe to open. Some sessions will feel easy and some won't. Both are part of the process.