

Vibrators and Other Sex Toys are Commonly Recommended to Patients, But Does Size Matter? Dimensions of Commonly Sold Products

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ABSTRACT

Introduction. Vibrators and dildos are commonly used by women and men in the United States, and are increasingly recommended by clinicians. In addition, sex toys and various household objects are sometimes used for sexual stimulation in ways that pose health risks to their users. Data about the dimensions of such products may inform clinicians' recommendations.

Aim. The purpose of the present study was to assess the sizes (length and circumference) of vibrators and dildos marketed for vaginal or anal insertion on websites that sell sexual enhancement products.

Methods. Eight websites that sell sexual enhancement products were identified for inclusion in the study. The dimensions of vaginal vibrators and dildos listed for sale on each website were noted, and descriptive data were calculated for each website.

Main Outcome Measures. Product length and circumference (mean, median, and range).

Results. Popular sex toy distributors offer a variety of product sizes. The length of many vibrators and dildos was sized between 4 and 6 in, and circumference was between 4 and 5 in. However, some companies featured products of a considerably larger size than others.

Conclusion. Length and circumference of vibrators and dildos varied, but on average approximated mean penile dimensions. Clinicians' recommendations for use of vaginal or anal products can be enhanced by familiarity and offering additional information about product sizes and retailers. **Herbenick D, Barnhart KJ, Beavers K, and Benge S. Vibrators and other sex toys are commonly recommended to patients, but does size matter? Dimensions of commonly sold products. J Sex Med 2015;12:641–645.**

Key Words. Vibrator; Dildo; Vaginal Capacity; Sex Toy

Introduction

Vibrators and other sex toys are commonly used by women and men in the United States. A 2008 nationally representative study of more than 3,000 American women and men ages 18 to 60 found that about 53% of women and nearly half of men reported lifetime solo or partnered vibrator use. In addition, 32.3% of women reported lifetime dildo use [1–3]. Such products have become increasingly mainstream in

US culture and are, in addition to being sold in adult bookstores and sex shops, also commonly sold in drug stores, large retail stores, through the Internet, and in-home sex toy parties [4–6]. Additionally, most women and men express positive attitudes toward women's use of vibrators, including a belief that vibrator use can be a part of a healthy relationship [7].

Sexual enhancement products are not only a part of couples' sexual experiences, but vibrators are now commonly recommended by some clini-

cians to enhance sexual desire and facilitate orgasm, or as part of a larger treatment plan for certain types of vulvar pain [8–10]. Some clinicians even sell sexual enhancement products, such as vibrators, in their practice [11,12]. Research with young, female survivors of breast cancer (a group noted for a high prevalence of sexual difficulties associated with treatment) has shown that most women surveyed expressed an interest in sexual enhancement products such as vibrators [13].

However, vibrators and dildos vary in size, shape, material, and the kinds of stimulation they are marketed as offering (e.g., vaginal insertion, clitoral stimulation, anal insertion, etc), with little published information available to inform clinicians' recommendations. This is particularly important as it has been well documented that the vagina, while variable in size, is variable within a known and limited range [14–17], and that vaginal insertion of objects of certain sizes can be uncomfortable for some women. Additionally, anal stimulation as part of sexual activities has been reported by an increasing number of women and men in the United States [18–20], though little is known about the use of anal sex toys outside of the somewhat extensive anal foreign body literature [21,22].

Aims

The purpose of the present study was to assess the sizes (length and circumference) of vibrators and dildos marketed for vaginal or anal insertion that were available on eight websites that sell sexual enhancement products.

Methods

We selected eight websites that sell sexual enhancement products and that were known to us (Adam and Eve, Amazon, Babeland, Early to Bed, Good

Vibrations, MyPleasure, Pure Romance, and Tantus). The third author reviewed the websites in Summer 2013 and again in Winter 2014 to identify products described as being for vaginal insertion or anal insertion. She recorded data that the websites provided about each product's length, width, and circumference when available (the latter typically being noted as the circumference at the thickest point, for products of variable circumference). Circumference was calculated for products with only width reported on the website. The recorded product length was specified as the portion of the product that can be inserted, or insertable portion, and not full length of the product. The fourth author double checked these data in 2014 and edited accordingly to represent new products or to complete areas of missing data. For seven of the eight websites, data from all available products were recorded. Given the extremely large selection available on Amazon, a random selection of 25 vaginal vibrators and 25 anal products was included in the analyses.

Main Outcome Measures

The main outcome measures are the product length and circumference provided on or calculated from each company website that was examined.

Results

Vaginal Vibrators

Table 1 shows the mean dimensions, and range of dimensions, for vaginal vibrators and dildos on the eight identified websites that sell sexual enhancement products. As can be seen, the mean length calculated of vaginal vibrators listed for sale on six of the eight websites was less than 6 in, and the mean circumference of these was less than 4.5 in.

Table 1 Length and circumference of vaginal vibrators and dildos

Website	Vaginal vibrators				Vaginal dildos			
	Length		Circumference		Length		Circumference	
	Mean	Range	Mean	Range	Mean	Range	Mean	Range
AdamandEve.com	5.63	2.5–11.0	4.34	1.6–7.85	7	3.5–12.0	5.18	2.36–7.86
Amazon.com	6.67	2.75–15.0	4.87	3.14–7.07	—	—	—	—
Babeland.com	5.85	2.75–9.75	4.15	1.88–6.28	6.86	4.5–11.0	4.78	2.36–7.07
Early2Bed.com	5.6	2.0–9.37	4	1.57–6.28	6.4	4.0–11.0	4.71	2.51–7.07
GoodVibes.com	5.18	2.0–9.75	4.05	1.96–5.50	6.89	4.0–11.0	4.78	2.36–7.07
MyPleasure.com	5.42	2.5–10.0	4.27	1.96–6.28	4.89	3.5–6.0	4.3	2.36–5.5
PureRomance.com	5.23	3.0–7.0	4.48	3.0–6.0	N/A	7.0–7.0	N/A	5.0–5.0
TantusInc.com	6.46	4.6–7.2	4.78	3.77–5.89	6.53	4.25–11.0	5	2.51–8.64

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