

TRANSGENDER HEALTH

## How Big is Too Big? The Girth of Bestselling Insertive Sex Toys to Guide Maximal Neophallus Dimensions



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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** In our practice we have encountered 4 female-to-male transgender patients seeking neophallus revision surgery for girth precluding penetrative vaginal or anal intercourse. Despite this, there is little evidence available to guide transitioning patients in neophallus sizing. In this work we examined the dimensions of bestselling realistic dildos, presuming that the most popular dimensions would reflect population preferences for penetrative toys and phalluses.

**Aim:** To determine a maximal upper limit for girth compatible with penetrative intercourse based on measurements of bestselling realistic dildos and published erect penile dimensions.

**Methods:** We collected measurements for “realistic dildos” designated as bestsellers for the top 5 Alexa.com-rated online adult retailers in the United States and for [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). We compared these with measurements of dildos available at Good Vibrations in San Francisco and with studies of erect natal dimensions. We compared all data with measurements of 4 index patients whose neophallus girth prevented penetrative intercourse.

**Outcomes:** Length and circumference of overall bestselling and largest bestselling realistic dildos as reported on top websites and measured by investigators.

**Results:** The average insertive length of the compiled dildos ( $16.7 \pm 1.6$  cm) was 1 SD longer than natal functional erect penile length as reported in the literature ( $15.7 \pm 2.6$  cm); however, their average circumference ( $12.7 \pm 0.8$  cm) mirrored natal erect penile girth ( $12.3 \pm 1.3$ ). The average girth of vendors' top 3 largest-girth dildos was  $15.1 \pm 0.9$  cm, 2 SD wider than natal erect penile girth. Index patients had an average length of  $16.3 \pm 3.2$  cm and an average girth of  $17.6 \pm 1.3$  cm. Index patient girth was 4 to 5 SD wider than the average natal erect girth.

**Clinical Implications:** Based on our data, we suggest that a surgically created neophallus should have a girth no wider than 15.1 cm after implantation of an inflatable penile prosthesis. This corresponds to 2 SD wider than the average natal man's erect girth.

**Strengths and Limitations:** Strengths include in-person measurements of patients whose girth prevented penetrative intercourse, the large number of dildos assessed, and correlations with in-person measurements. Limitations include the inability to account for the pliability of different materials, whether dildos were used for vaginal and/or anal insertion, the limited sample of 4 transmen for in-person measurement, and the absence of implanted inflatable penile prostheses in index neophalluses.

**Conclusions:** Neophallus girth wider than 15.1 cm could lead to difficulty in penetrative intercourse for many individuals. A conservative recommendation for neophallus girth is 13 to 14 cm, or 0.5 to 1.5 SD wider than natal erect penile girth. **Isaacson D, Aghili R, Wongwittavas N, Garcia M. How Big is Too Big? The Girth of Bestselling Insertive Sex Toys to Guide Maximal Neophallus Dimensions. J Sex Med 2017;14:1455–1461.**

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**Key Words:** Transgender Surgery; Phalloplasty; Sexual Intercourse; Penile Girth; Dyspareunia; Sex Toys

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## INTRODUCTION

Access to female-to-male gender-affirming surgery is increasing in the United States<sup>1</sup> and abroad.<sup>2,3</sup> In this context of increased access to services by trans-patients, there is a need for resources for patients and physicians administering the full spectrum of transgender health care services. Of the evidence available to guide the transitioning male patient and his physician on post-phalloplasty sexual behavior and experience, existing studies have primarily used genital sensitivity, ability to reach orgasm, and self-reported satisfaction as primary end points.<sup>4–7</sup> One prior study further assessed postoperative flaccid and erect neophallus length and girth and their stability over time.<sup>4</sup> However, to date, there has been no evidence-based literature on the optimal range or maximal size of the neophallus for satisfactory vaginal or anal penetrative intercourse.

With phalloplasty, a neophallus is created using skin flaps mobilized to the recipient site attached to a vascularized pedicle or as a free flap.<sup>8</sup> Commonly used phalloplasty donor sites include the radial forearm free flap, anterior lateral thigh free or pedicle flap, and suprapubic and groin pedicle flaps. Although the flap area in a radial forearm free flap is naturally limited by the length and width of the forearm, with anterior lateral thigh, suprapubic, and groin flaps the maximum flap length and area that can be harvested are less limited and can be used to create neophalluses of very large length and girth. Furthermore, the degree of subcutaneous fat with anterior lateral thigh, suprapubic, and groin flaps is generally greater than with radial artery forearm flaps, which increases the risk of the neophallus being excessively thick and makes closing the tubularized flap a potential challenge. Excessive girth is a risk that surgeons must be cautious to avoid, because although excess length does not preclude partial penetration, excessive girth can make penetration impossible. Inflatable penile prostheses can be implanted as a second procedure to allow the patient to attain an erection.<sup>4,9</sup> One group previously assessed the increase in girth of radial forearm flap neophalluses with 1 to 2 inflatable penile prosthesis cylinders. In the erect state, mid-shaft girth increased by only 0.60 cm when a single cylinder was used but increased by up to 1.25 cm with a 2-cylinder prosthesis.<sup>4</sup>

At our center in San Francisco, California, we have encountered 4 patients who sought revision surgery to decrease the girth of a previously constructed neophallus. Excess phallus length per se does not preclude intercourse and can be compensated for by limiting the length of the phallus that is inserted. Conversely, excess girth can make penetration impossible if the phallus diameter exceeds the maximal diameter of the receptive partner's orifice. These patients stated that their excess girth rendered insertion impossible or excessively painful for their partner. Based on our experience in San Francisco and London,<sup>4,8</sup> during preoperative planning, transgender men commonly request neophallus dimensions that are larger than the average penile dimensions of natal men. Some of our index patients relayed that their final dimensions were larger than they expected or that they

believed their surgeons took personal pride in their large final neophallus dimensions.

Prior studies characterizing receptive partner preferences for penis size have largely relied on self-report methods.<sup>10–13</sup> To determine what maximal neophallus dimensions are compatible with insertion, we hypothesized that this upper limit of receptive girth would be reflected in the upper limit of girth among insertive sex toys in a market driven by consumer preferences. We expected people would not buy dildos whose girth was too large to insert. In this report we describe the dimensions of the most popular and bestselling dildos available for insertive use to deduce a reasonable maximum neophallus circumference. To put these measurements in perspective, we also compared insertable dildo dimensions with previous studies of mean erect penile dimensions.

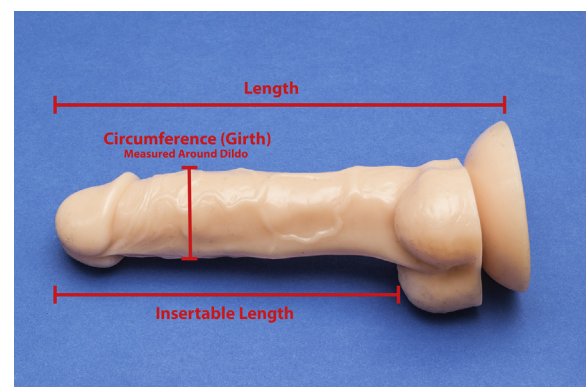
## METHODS

### Measurement of Index Patients

All 4 index patients presented to our clinic for revision phalloplasty to decrease their neophallus girth. Preoperatively, we measured neophallus length dorsally from the penile tip to the penoscrotal junction with a standard tape measure. Circumference was measured in a similar fashion at the widest point of the neophallus.

### Compilation of Online Measurements

We used [Alexa.com](http://Alexa.com), which uses an algorithm that tracks internet traffic, to identify the top 5 online vendors in the category “Adult > Shopping > Sex Toys and Supplies” in the United States. We also collected data from [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com), the largest online retailer in the United States, using the search query “realistic dildos.” “Realistic” is a manufacturer-designated category of dildos that, according to vendors, are modeled from actual penises and thus have the physical appearance of a natal human penis in anatomy, proportions, and surface features (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Diagram showing measurements defined as dildo length, insertable length, and circumference (ie, girth). Figure 1 is available in color online at [www.jsm.jsexmed.org](http://www.jsm.jsexmed.org).

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