

LIFESTYLE

If You Can't Remember the Last Time You Cleaned Your Vibrator, Read This

A quick and dirty (pun intended) expert-approved guide to keeping all of your sex toys germ-free.

By [Maressa Brown](#) | Updated on August 31, 2022 @ 02:45PM

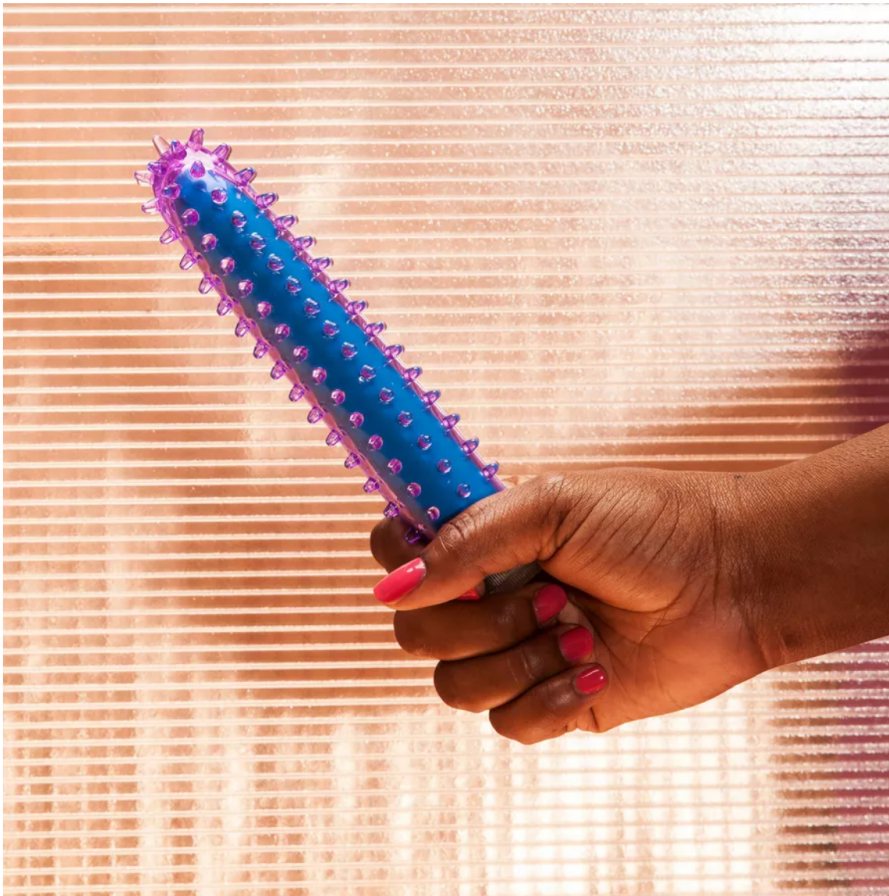


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If you've been finding yourself fantasizing about steamy hookups rather than actually experiencing them (*le sigh*), perhaps you've taken it upon yourself to engage in some [sexual self-care](#). In fact, we couldn't think of a better way to boost intimacy than with a trusty vibrator. As for those of you in relationships, what better way to

spice things up in the boudoir than with a new toy?

There are a ton of [sex toys](#) out there, just be aware that some are easier to clean than others (more on that below). In fact, properly cleaning your toy is just as important as being able to enjoy using it (although definitely way less fun). "When a sex toy comes in contact with bodily fluids or your or a partner's skin, microorganisms – like bacteria – are transferred to the toy's surface and, depending on the material, they either live on the surface or nestle into tiny pores of the toy's material," explains [Anne Hodder-Shipp](#), an ACS certified sex educator who has worked in the sex toy industry for over a decade.

[Shannon Chavez, Psy.D.](#), a psychologist and sex therapist in Los Angeles, explains that cleaning these microorganisms from the device will also prevent them from interfering with the body's pH. This is integral to preempting an imbalance of your natural, germ-fighting bacteria that exists in vaginal flora, which could lead to bacterial vaginosis, yeast infection, and UTIs.

To reduce your risk for those not-so-pleasant infections – and to help keep the toy in good shape – you'll want to ensure you're cleaning and storing your toy properly, based on the material it's made from, after every use.

Here's what you need to know to keep your sex toys sanitized and safe.

The Best Sex Toy Materials

Certain sex toys are nearly impossible to keep clean, so it's important to read the fine print before adding to your cart. Your best bet is to avoid sex toys that are porous, such as those made from elastomer, jelly rubber (often found in novelty gifts), polyvinyl chloride (PVC), and thermoplastic elastomer (TPE), says Alexandra Fine, CEO and co-founder of [Dame Products](#). Cyberskin – made from a blend of silicone, latex, PVC, or TPE – falls into this category too. These toys can be harder to clean, as they absorb fluids and bacteria.

Instead, look for toys made with non-porous materials, such as medical-grade silicone and acrylonitrile butadiene styrene (ABS) plastic, which are less likely to hold on to bacteria, explains Fine.

Chavez adds that most medical-grade materials, like silicone and stainless steel, are also FDA-approved and identified as safe to use on the skin and tissue. "Medical-grade materials are also stronger and less susceptible to tearing, punctures, and other wear and tear."

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How to Clean Sex Toys of Every Material Type

Set the stage for an easy sanitizing session by setting up a cleaning station with all the supplies you need ahead of time. This generally includes soap, water, and a washcloth (preferably microfiber cloths, which are highly absorbent and soft) to wipe your device down, says Chavez.

Here, the best cleaning method for every sex toy material.

Silicone, Glass, Stainless Steel, or Wood and Motorized Toys

If your toy vibrates (and therefore has a motor), Chavez advises against submerging it into water. "It can cause corrosion in the battery and impact the function of the device," she notes. Instead, clean these products with a mild soap that you would use on your hands, such as antibacterial soap.

Just be sure to stick with something basic and unscented (think plain old Dial) and avoid soaps with oils, perfumes, glycerin, or other additives, advises Chavez. "These chemicals can break down the material of the device and be harmful to your genital tissue," she says. "You can also spray rubbing alcohol on the device to disinfect any germs that may be lingering after cleaning with soap and water. It's not necessary but will help ensure your device is clean."

Silicone, Pyrex, Stainless Steel, or Stone and Non-motorized Toys

These lower-tech models can be cleaned first with soap and water and then sterilized in boiling water, says Chavez. "Boil for at least five minutes for a thorough clean," she notes. "Glass (Pyrex) products can be placed in the dishwasher. Many people put their glass dildos in the dishwasher for a good clean and steam."

Cyberskin Toys

Because cyberskin is a more delicate material than the others,

Chavez recommends using mild soap and water, then leaving your toy out to thoroughly dry before storing.

ABS Hard Plastic Toys

"ABS hard plastic is a nonporous, safe sex toy material," explains Fine. "These toys can be cleaned with soap and hot water."

Elastomer, Thermoplastic Elastomer (TPR), or Jelly Rubber Toys

While experts recommend avoiding these toys because they can't be fully cleaned and are so porous, you can preempt problems by avoiding direct contact and using a condom on these toys, says Chavez. "I suggest a condom on the product to act as a protective barrier for the skin and to help preserve the toy," she says. When it's cleaning time, wash the toy with an antibacterial soap and allow it to dry fully before stowing it away.

Other Ways to Keep Your Toys Clean and Safe

Not only can squeaky-clean habits keep infections at bay, but protecting sex toys during and after use can help them last longer by ensuring they're free from wear and tear-causing residue. A few best practices:

Suit Up Your Toy With a Condom

Even if you aren't using a porous sex toy, Hodder-Shipp recommends using external (male) condoms on your toys to prevent bacteria transmission, especially when sharing a toy with a partner or using the same toy in more than one orifice.

"This added barrier prevents bodily fluid and bacteria transfer without requiring multiple trips to the sink," she notes. "Simply put the condom on and, when done, remove it and put on a new one for whatever fun stuff is planned next. I suggest using extra lube when an external condom is involved and avoid oil-based products because they're not condom-compatible."

Take Care When Storing Toys

No matter a toy's material, avoid storing it in cramped or damp quarters, like rolling around in a drawer, where it can touch other items, suggests Hodder-Shipp. This is especially important for products made of elastomers or rubber, which might deteriorate if left to come in contact with other materials.

For this reason, Chavez recommends [housing your sex toys](#) in a storage bag, case, or organizer that closes and zips, which will keep dust, hair, and toxins off your toys. "Many organizers are similar to makeup train cases with different compartments and storage options," says Chavez.

Fine recommends [Dame's Stash Toy Pouch](#) (\$20), which also features small zippered compartments to hold chargers and smaller toys.

Try a Ready-to-Go Toy Cleaner

If sudsing up your toy after every use seems like a lot of work, there are super-convenient sex toy cleaners that can be used in a pinch prior to a more thorough wash. "I like spray cleaners because they're easy to use and provide disinfecting before a soap and water cleaning and storage," says Chavez. "You spray the cleaner on the toy, let it sit for five minutes, and clean it off with a cloth."

The same rules go for choosing a toy cleaner as choosing a soap. Reach for water-based options, which won't break down materials like oil- or silicone-based cleaners, and be wary of fragrance and preservatives (like parabens), which can irritate sensitive skin, says Hodder-Shipp.

Shop Our Favorite Products

01 | [Lelo Cleaning Spray](#)
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Buy

This spray contains antimicrobial and antifungal ingredients, chamomile extract and thymol, while the addition of anti-inflammatory zinc salts are meant to reduce irritation. Lelo's claim that the spray kills 99.9% germ and bacteria is backed with authority, thanks to FDA approval, says Chavez. The formula is suitable for use with silicone, rubber, and latex.

02 | Intimate Earth Green Tea Cleaner Spray

of 03



Buy

"This can be used on all materials like stainless steel, glass, and silicone," says Chavez. "It has strong cleansing ingredients —like antibiotic tea tree oil and guava bark — but is also natural and non-toxic to the environment and body."


03 | Uvee Home Play Sanitizer

of 03



Buy

If you want something higher-tech, this sanitizing and charging storage system for adult toys is pricey but worth the investment, notes Chavez. "It uses UV light to kill 99.9% of bacteria on the surface of the device in less than 10 minutes," she explains. If that wasn't enough, it also charges and stores toys.

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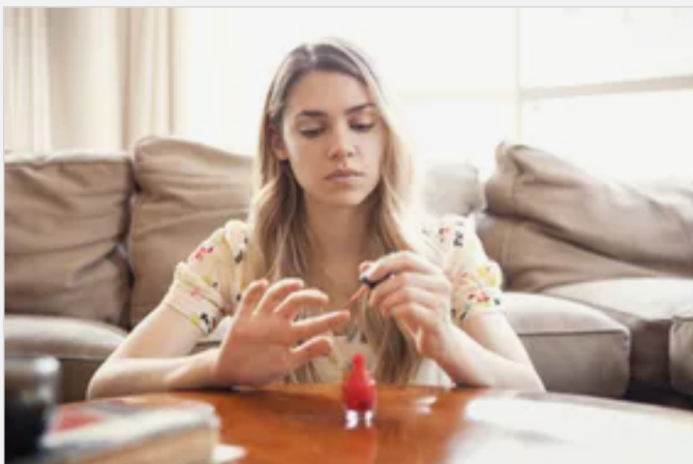
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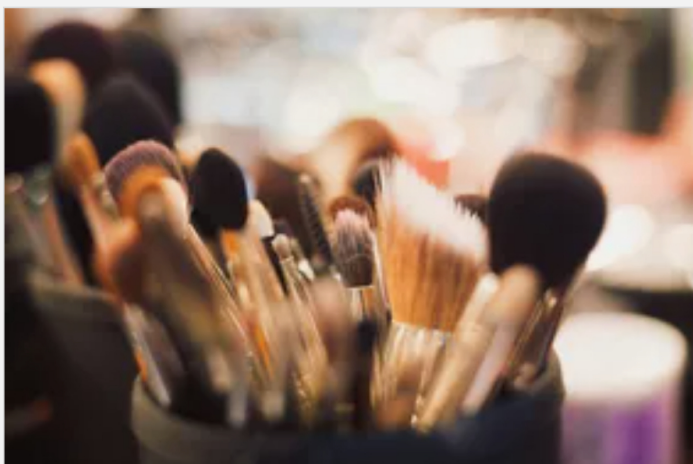


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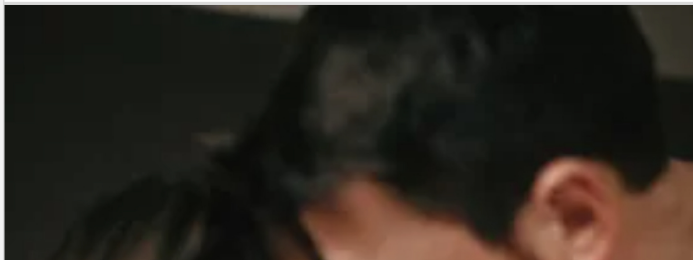
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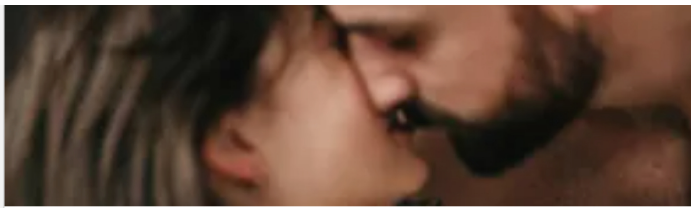


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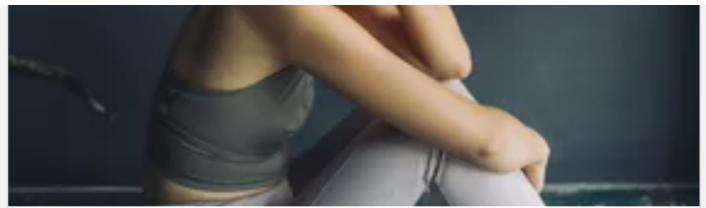




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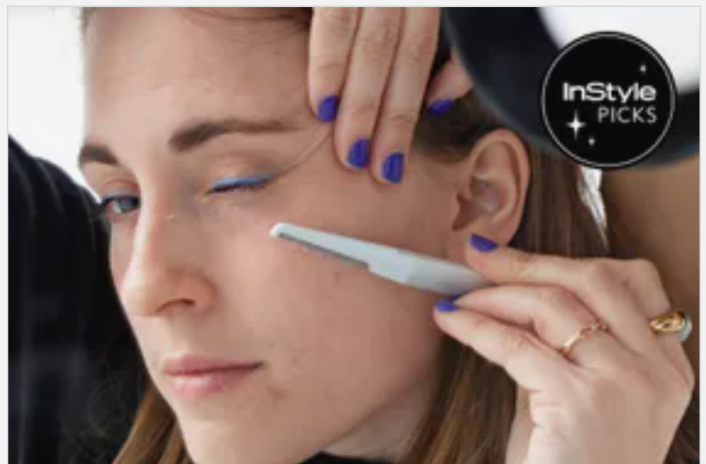
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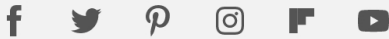
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