

## Guide to Lubricants and Moisturizers

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### The Importance of Using Lube

Many people view personal lubricants as a solution to a “problem,” or as a hindrance to authentic sexual satisfaction. But the fact is lubricants can increase pleasure, safety, and satisfaction for any body at any age. Shopping for lube can be a challenge because not all personal lubricants are right for everybody (and some lubes aren’t really right for any body).

What type of lube is best for you? There are four major types of personal lubricants (Silicone, Oil, Water, Hybrid), classified by their primary ingredients. Each type of lube has particular strengths and weaknesses which make it better suited for specific activities, uses, personal preferences, and bodies.

#### Silicone

##### Pros:

- Hypoallergenic, as it doesn’t soak into the skin and doesn’t need preservatives
- Lasts the longest of any type of lubricant
- Compatible with all safer sex barrier methods; in fact, it is the lube used on almost all pre-lubricated condoms

##### Cons:

- Not always compatible with solid silicone sex toys

#### Oil Based

(only plant based products are recommended.  
Petroleum (like Vaseline) can breed bacteria inside the body.

##### Pros:

- Hydrates and improves the elasticity of sensitive, fragile, and thinning skin over time
- Lasts longer than water based lubricants, but not as long as silicone based
- The only type of lubricant that is actually 100% organic
- Compatible with all non-toxic sex toy materials

##### Cons:

- NOT compatible with safer sex barriers made from latex or polyisoprene
- Takes longer to clear out of the body than other types of lubricants, therefore is not recommended for people who experience chronic, recurring bacterial vaginosis, urinary tract infections, or yeast overgrowth

#### Hybrid (Silicone & Water)

##### Pros:

- Less likely to cause irritation than water based lubes, but not regarded as hypoallergenic
- Lasts longer than water based lubricants, but not as long as silicone based
- Compatible with all sex toy materials and safer sex barrier methods

##### Cons:

- Newer product with less information available

## Water Based

### Pros:

- Feels most like the body's natural lubrication
- Compatible with all sex toy materials and safer sex barrier methods

### Cons:

- Will dry out quickest of any type of lube, as it evaporates and/or soaks into the skin
- Generally has the longest ingredients list and always contains preservatives, making it the most potentially irritating type of lube, especially for those with sensitive skin, compromised mucous membrane integrity, or compromised immune systems .

### **It's worth taking a closer look at water-based lube.**

There are two major characteristics particular to water based lubes that are more accurate predictors of their safety than any one ingredient -- pH and osmolality.

First, let's look at pH. If you experience burning or stinging when you use lube, the information on this page could be really important!

What is pH? pH is the measure of a solution's acidity or basicity on a scale from 0-14. A pH of 0 would be the most acidic, a pH of 14 would be most basic, and a pH of 7 would be neutral.

### **Vaginal pH**

Vaginal pH plays an important role in the immune function of the vulvovaginal microbiome, as it helps maintain the balance of healthy bacteria and yeast, and acts as a defense against pathogen transmission. Vaginal pH naturally changes throughout the menstrual cycle and is closely tied with estrogen and progesterone levels. As the body changes with menopause, or other causes of decreased estrogen, the pH of the vagina rises from 3.5-5.5 to closer to 6-7. This is a completely natural occurrence which doesn't necessarily reflect poor health; however, it does leave the genitals more susceptible to BV, UTIs, yeast overgrowth, or pathogens. When combined with other effects of low estrogen this raise in pH can create an environment where very acidic lubricants cause burning or stinging.

### **Anal pH**

Anal pH is closer to neutral, usually between 6 and 7, and remains in this range consistently throughout hormone fluctuations and the lifespan. pH inside of the anus and rectum helps protect the mucous membranes there from absorbing anything harmful, and acts as a buffer between alkaline fecal matter and the body. Many personal lubricants have pH values around 4 or 5, so if they're used rectally, especially in a body with any lesions, sores, or openings in the rectal mucous membranes, they may cause stinging and irritation. Finding a lubricant with a pH closer to 6-7 may be more appropriate for the anal environment. Silicone and plant oil-based lubricants are also extremely popular for anal play, and don't have pH values to worry about!

## **Ingredients to Look out for; do NOT buy a lube with these ingredients!**

Glycerin(e) - a sugar alcohol that has anecdotally been linked with yeast overgrowth and directly corresponds with increased osmolality. Any water based lubricant that has glycerine in its first three ingredients is more likely to be significantly hyperosmotic.

Propylene Glycol - a chemical derived from petroleum (aka “petrochemical”) which has been linked with BV and is a sensitizer, meaning the more you’re exposed to it the more likely you are to have allergic reactions to it. Any water based lubricant that has propylene glycol in its first three ingredients is more likely to be significantly hyperosmotic.

Nonoxynol 9 & Chlorhexidine Gluconate - both of these ingredients are surface acting agents (aka “surfactants”), which change the surface tension and permeability of cell membranes. Both are designed to kill microbes in an effort to make them sterile or antiseptic, but this also kills healthy bacteria and compromises epithelial cell integrity. These ingredients, as used in lubricants, can lead to a burning or stinging sensation, and leave the body more susceptible to STI and pathogen transmission for 24-27 hours.

Petroleum Oils - these oils are ideal breeding grounds for bacteria and take a long time to be cleared from inside of the body, so they’re never recommended for use as a personal lubricant.

Polyquaternium-15 - used as a preservative and skin adherent in a limited number of water based lubricants and spermicides. It can enhance viral activity and infectivity of HIV and potentially similar viruses, so it’s not advisable to use in situations where STI contraction or transmission is possible.

Benzocaine - a numbing ingredient that is a potential skin irritant. Numbing lubes can be used responsibly, but it’s important to remember to listen to the body’s pain responses. If penetration or friction is painful, numbing ingredients will not solve the problem, and the body will continue to react to pain or irritation even if the sensation has been dulled. Continuing painful activities, with or without numbing products, can actually lead to increased or chronic pain.

Sugars - some lubricants use sugars, like glucose, honey, or maltodextrin, for flavor. However, all of these ingredients can feed yeast, dry sticky or tacky, and throw off the natural balance of the vulvovaginal environment; therefore, they’re not recommended for internal use.

## Lindsey's Recommendations

**Silicone (ok with condoms) (NOT for use with silicone vibe) (great for daily moisture)**

- [Überlube](#)
- [Sliquid Silver](#)
- [Pjur Woman](#)
- [Pjur Med Soft Glide](#)

**Water-Based (ok with condoms) (important to get PH balanced, the following are)**

- [Sliquid Sassy](#)
- [Pjur Med Repair Glide Water Based](#)
- [Yes](#)
- [Good Clean Love](#)
- [Aloe Cadabra](#)
- [Sliquid Organics](#)

**Oil based (good for scar care) (NOT ok with condoms) (not recommended for lubricant with penetration)**

- [Yes oil](#)
- [Vit E](#)
- [Rosehip oil](#)
- [Coconut oil](#)