

# INPLASY

## Updated Overview on Vaginismus: A Systematic Review

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### ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

**Support** - Deanship of Scientific Research, Northern Border University.

**Review Stage at time of this submission** - Completed but not published.

**Conflicts of interest** - None declared.

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**Amendments** - This protocol was registered with the International Platform of Registered Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis Protocols (INPLASY) on 18 February 2025 and was last updated on 18 February 2025.

## INTRODUCTION

**Review question / Objective** Explore the recently available data on vaginismus, including the risk factors, associations, and psychological aspects.

**Rationale** Vaginismus is a commonly experienced medical issue, affecting about 1-7% of the female population worldwide. A critical analysis of this condition often faced by women when describing their physical experiences could yield valuable insights. This exploration may enhance our understanding of vaginismus and contribute to broader improvements in women's healthcare.

**Condition being studied** Vaginal penetration problems that are persistent or recurrent, pain during vaginal sex, fear or anxiety associated with tensing of the pelvic floor muscles, and/or vulvovaginal pain are all considered vaginismus.

## METHODS

### Search strategy

- Following the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) standards, this systematic review was carried out.
- Databases searched: PubMed, SCOPUS, Web of Science, and Science Direct. Language restriction: English only
- Key search terms: "Psychology," "Risk factors," "Vaginismus," and "Sexual disorders" (converted to PubMed MeSH terms where applicable)
- Boolean operators used: "OR" and "AND" to combine keywords
- Search filters applied: Human trials, free articles, full English publications
- Date range: Last 5 years (2019-2023)
- Additional criteria: No age limits restricted, free accessible articles, only human subjects
- The use of Rayyan (QCRI) for validating search results

- The process of title and abstract screening is based on inclusion/exclusion criteria
- The full-text review process for articles meeting initial criteria.

### Participant or population

Women aged 18 years and older  
 Women with a primary diagnosis of vaginismus according to established diagnostic criteria (e.g. ICD-10 or DSM-IV/DSM-5)  
 Women of any ethnic group and nationality  
 Women in the reproductive age group (often 20-35 years old)

Key exclusion criteria include:

Women with prior diagnoses of dyspareunia, pelvic floor muscle dysfunction, vaginal lesions/tumors  
 Women with major depressive disorder, psychotic disorder, or substance-related disorders  
 Women with post-traumatic stress disorder related to the genitals (e.g. from sexual abuse).

**Intervention** The primary aim is to provide an updated overview rather than to evaluate specific interventions. Our overview study does not focus on a particular intervention. The researchers are examining various factors associated with vaginismus, which might include psychological aspects, risk factors, and associated conditions or comorbidities.

**Comparator** This systematic review does not have a specific comparator group. It is an overview study that aims to summarize data on vaginismus across various studies, which may include different populations or subgroups, but not with the intent of direct comparison.

**Study designs to be included** The review focus on primary research studies that examine vaginismus diagnosis, risk factors, psychological aspects, and treatment outcomes. Both prospective and retrospective study designs can be included. Case reports and case series may also be considered if they provide relevant data on rare presentations or novel interventions for vaginismus.

### Eligibility criteria

Inclusion Criteria:

Studies that summarize available data on vaginismus, including risk factors, associations, and psychological aspects  
 Studies published in the last 5 years (2019-2023)  
 English language publications  
 Free accessible articles  
 Studies involving human subjects only

N.B. The review includes recent studies to provide an updated overview of vaginismus.

**Information sources** The four primary databases –PubMed, SCOPUS, Web of Science, and Science Direct–were thoroughly searched in order to locate the relevant literature.

### Main outcome(s)

The main outcomes are: Risk factors associated with vaginismus  
 Psychological aspects of vaginismus  
 Associations between vaginismus and other conditions or factors  
 Prevalence and incidence rates of vaginismus (if available in the reviewed studies)  
 Impact of vaginismus on quality of life and relationships  
 Treatment approaches and their effectiveness (if included in the reviewed studies)  
 Comorbidities associated with vaginismus.

**Data management** Rayyan (QCRI) was used twice to validate the search strategy's findings [19]. The researchers assessed how relevant the abstracts and titles were by applying inclusion/exclusion criteria to the combined search results. The reviewers carefully examined each paper that satisfied the inclusion requirements. The authors talked about methods for resolving conflicts. The authorized study was uploaded using an already-prepared data extraction form. The writers extracted information about study titles, authors, year, country, participants, gender, goals, and primary outcomes. The assessment of bias risk was completed on a separate page.

**Quality assessment / Risk of bias analysis** The ROBINS-I risk of bias assessment technique for non-randomized trials of treatments was used to evaluate the quality of the included studies. Confounding participant selection, intervention classification, variation from intended interventions, missing data, outcome evaluation, and choice of reported result were among the seven themes that were examined.

**Strategy of data synthesis** Summary tables were created utilizing information from relevant studies to provide a qualitative assessment of the research's findings and components. The most effective manner to use the data from the included study articles was determined once the data for the systematic review was collected.

**Subgroup analysis** Not applicable in our case.

**Sensitivity analysis** Not applicable in our case.

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**Language restriction** English articles only have been included.

**Country(ies) involved** Saudi Arabia.

**Keywords** Vaginismus; psychological effects; psychotherapies; Systematic review.

**Contributions of each author**

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