

Caring for Vibrators, and Making Them Last

By Michael Castleman

Vibrators don't cost much. But they're more than a cheap thrill. They're a little electric friend—and like any friendship, making it last takes a certain amount of effort. Follow these simple suggestions and your little friend should keep buzzing for a nice, long time.

You Get What You Pay For

Like any small electrical appliance, vibrators don't last forever. The main limitations on their longevity are:

- The quality of the motor.
- The power supply.
- The number of speeds.
- How often you use it, and for how long.

Small electrical motors are so common in our lives—coffee grinders, food processors, electric razors, and toothbrushes—that we often take them for granted. However, small motors are complicated, and can break.

With motors, in general, you get what you pay for. Vibrators range in price from around \$20 to more than \$100. In general, more expensive vibrators have better motors, and last longer.

Light-Weight Vs. Heavy-Duty

Plug-in vibrators generally last longer than battery-powered vibes. Two of the selling points for battery-powered vibrators are their small size and light weight. They often fit in a small purse and can travel almost anywhere. But small vibrators use light-weight motors. They just don't last as long as the heavier-duty motors built into plug-in vibes. Of course, there's a place for both small, lightweight vibrators,

and larger, heavier ones. One of the advantages of plug-in vibes is that they usually last longer.

Many vibrator users love multi-speed vibes because they are so versatile. Sometimes you're in the mood for a light buzz, while at other times, you want more intensity. But multi-speed vibrators require speed controls that may break. Breakage-resistant speed controls add more weight to the product, so here again, plug-in models tend to last longer than those that are battery-powered.

Just as marathon runners burn through running shoes faster than occasional joggers, a vibrator used daily can't be expected to last as long as a vibe used less frequently. If you use a vibrator frequently, a plug-in model is best—or better yet, buy several different vibes that suit your needs in a variety of settings.

Finally, some people used their vibrators for a few minutes, while others keep them running much longer. Most battery-powered vibrators are not designed to run continuously for longer than about 20 minutes on low speed, and 10 minutes on high speed. Heavier-duty plug-in models can go longer. If you enjoy extended vibrator play—like an hour or so—buy a few different models, and alternate them every 10 to 15 minutes. That way none of them run continuously for a long time, not to mention that you can enjoy the different sensations the different models provide.

So, how long should a vibrator last? That's impossible to predict. Some toasters burn out in a year. Others last 10 years. The same goes with vibrators.

Making Battery-Powered Vibrators Last

Battery-powered motors are designed to operate most efficiently when powered by batteries operating a full strength. As batteries wear down, they put out less juice, which means less efficient operation, and less pleasure for you. So change your batteries frequently.

In addition, it's best to remove the batteries after each use. Now, that's a hassle. Most people leave batteries in from first use until they die. But battery removal adds to vibrator longevity. It keeps the positive and negative contacts clean, and it prevents damage in case the batteries leak.

Waterproof vibrators can be lots of fun in the tub, shower, or hot tub. But water is a motor-killer. Waterproof vibrators are designed to isolate the motor and battery compartments from all water. This is for your safety. But if a tiny crack develops in

the device's housing, it's possible for a little water to seep inside—not enough for a short-circuit that might cause harm, but enough to damage the mechanism. If you use waterproof vibrators, check them regularly for cracks, and use them carefully. Over-enthusiastic use can shorten the vibe's life.

Making Plug-In Vibrators Last

The main issue with plug-in vibes is the cord. It's only so long. If you get carried away and pull on the cord, it might pop out of the outlet, or the insulation might begin to tear, or the cord might begin to disconnect from the device. When using plug-in vibes, don't stretch the cord. Give yourself plenty of slack. That might mean using an extension cord.

Never use plug-in vibrators around water or other liquids (beer, wine, etc.). Water and plug-in vibes are a dangerous combination. If you'd like to play with a vibrator in or around water, buy a waterproof vibrator.

Washing and Caring for Vibrators

Some vibrators come with washing and care instructions. If so, follow them. But many don't, so here's a quick guide to cleaning and storage.

Many people simply wash their vibrators with soap and water after using them. If you do this, be sure the battery and motor compartments do not come in contact with any water, or you might short them out. Soap and water are fine for hygiene purposes, but for vibrator longevity, we recommend Adult Toy Cleanser. Plain soap and water can leave a filmy residue, and over time, cause product discoloration. Adult Toy Cleanser is a mild detergent that cleans better than soap and water and leaves no residue. MyPleasure.com sells it.

The harder and less porous the material, the easier it is to clean. With hard plastic vibrators, a quick cleaning with Adult Toy Cleanser is usually all that's necessary. Afterwards, dry plastic vibes with a towel.

Jelly and silicone vibrators are softer and more porous, and therefore a bit more challenging to keep clean. Again, begin with Adult Toy Cleanser. Pat them dry with a towel, then allow them to air dry completely. Finally, dust them with cornstarch before storing.

The type of lubricant you use also affects the cleaning process. Water-based lubes wash off quickly and easily with either soap and water or Adult Toy Cleanser. Vegetable oils and silicone lubes require a bit more effort. Crisco, Vaseline and other petroleum-based lubricants tend to stick to vibrators and require the most cleaning effort.

If you're away from home and traveling light, you might not want to take Toy Cleanser and cornstarch with you. Another way to keep small vibrators clean is to cover them with a condom. That way, when you're finished, just roll off the condom and throw it away.

Store vibrators in a cool, dry place away from water, direct sunlight, and dust that can gum up their works.

Storing Vibrators

How you store vibes can affect their longevity. people store their toys in a night stand or closet. That's fine. But it's best to store wired vibrators—plug-in models and egg-style vibes—separately so that the wires don't snag or disconnect when you pull them out.

If you have a large number of vibes and other toys, invest in a hanging plastic shoe rack that comes with a dozen or so pouches. Each shoe pouch can hold a vibrator or other toy.