Ever wondered how your pink silicone Rabbit became so Rampant? We delve into the development of the next big dildo...
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A deep rumble is better than a speedy buzz.

1. Plugging a hole
Why, if creating dildos are doing such a good job at getting us off, do we need more? “As women become more comfortable with using toys, the technologies and materials develop,” says Jaques. “We have hundreds of toys in development at any one time and they can take up to two years from conception to going on sale.”

The company holds regular ‘go’/‘no go’ analysis meetings, where boardroom walls are plastered with Post-its of their current toy range to identify what’s missing. “We also look to other industries for new ideas,” Jaques says. “You’d be surprised how many of our toys have been inspired by a power tool or communications device.”

US company We-Vibe turns to consumer research for inspiration. “It can take up to 25 months to get an idea into the marketplace,” says product marketing specialist Tristan Weedmark. “A prototype has to pass through a number of stages, from concept to reality. It’s a process that demands a myriad of experts – designers, engineers and even gynaecologists. And given that the value of the global sex toy industry comes in at £3.8billion (according to born.com) it’s about time we understood the making of our sex toys, from drawing board to bedroom…”

2. It’s in the detail
Once a company has decided on the main functions of their new toy, engineers and designers are set to task. Initial 2D renders are created and decisions are made on size and texture. “It can be as simple as a sketch on a piece of paper, but it’s a starting point to bring the research to life,” Jaques says. Other considerations also come into play: where will the battery go? What size motor will work best? “The inner workings may well affect the external look,” he adds. “It’s best to know these details at the start, then we’ve got a pilot design to play with.”

3. The ins and outs
Time to meet Jesse, a 3D animation created by We-Vibe, which seems more action than the cast of Game of Thrones combined. “It’s key at this stage to know that the toy hits the spot, so we created Jesse, an amalgamation of about 400 female body types that incorporates all their internal systems,” Weedmark says. “We position a digital design inside her body on-screen to check how it sits in relation to the undulating zones.”

Next, the process gets physical. “We have a gynaecological model, similar to those used by medical students, which provides another level of guarantee that the product’s fitting perfectly.”

4. Quality control
Prototypes are then put through their paces. If a product is going to be marketed as waterproof, easy to clean and kink-friendly, the claims need to be robust. A team checks the toy holds up – the power is also put to the test. “Vibration is critical to success, so it’s vital to get the motor function absolutely right,” Weedmark adds. “Speed doesn’t always translate to power – our customers prefer a deep, rumbling pulse rather than a speedy surface-level buzz.”

5. Testing in context
Now comes Epiphora’s big ‘O’ moment. Once a prototype has been triple-checked, a small batch is produced, ready for human assessment. “Our first round of testing targets experts – sex therapists, gynaecologists, sex researchers,” Weedmark says. “They’re so well versed in the female anatomy and give us very specific notes on their experience.”

Epiphora takes her role incredibly seriously. “I test each toy multiple times, with all current settings. I write everything down, from how noisy it is to what sensations the texture achieves.”

Lovehoney prefers to keep its testers closer to home. “We have an in-house team, which helps keep our wilder ideas under wraps and means no question is off limits,” Jaques explains. “It’s key at this stage to know that the toy hits the spot, so we created Jesse, an amalgamation of about 400 female body types that incorporates all their internal systems,” Weedmark says. “We position a digital design inside her body on-screen to check how it sits in relation to the undulating zones.”

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6. The final touch
The look of a product can be just as critical to its success as its climactic- causing credentials. “Sure, the toy has to be fit for purpose, but if its design doesn’t appeal to customers, they won’t give it a chance,” Weedmark says.

Companies are moving away from phallic-shaped products because they’re considered intimidating, especially by men who see them as ‘comprehensive’, and can actually lose their libido as a result. “We’re investing heavily in the design of toys to make everything more sleek, chic and streamlined,” Weedmark adds. “We want toys to feel like an everyday purchase rather than something salacious or tantalising.”

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Once the insiders have had their say, the toys go public. Anywhere from 20 to 200 average Janes can be called on to test a single toy’s mettle. “We ask that each person uses the toy three times before filling out a questionnaire, covering everything from here & there internally to which setting is most likely to make them orgasm,” Weedmark says.

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About the expert

The expert: Zita West
Who: Sex and fertility expert, and director of Zita West Clinic

Q Can sex during IVF affect our success?
A This is a tricky one, as the impact of sex during IVF is not yet fully known. Some experts worry that orgasm could interfere with the implantation of an embryo. While there’s no concrete evidence, it would always be on the side of caution and take it easy during key stages of treatment. But the best thing is to fly by your partner’s concerns to your doctor or consultant and follow their advice. The other things to bear in mind is that you may well not feel like having sex while going through IVF but drugs they’re given can dull their sex drive and alter certain procedures, your body may feel tender. It’s just as important to listen to your body as it is to seek personalized expert advice.

Q Are there any exercises I can do boost fertility?
A While there isn’t really a specific exercise that’ll up your chances of conceiving, sex in good for fertility. It encourages your body to release beta-endorphins, which help to deal with stress hormones that can have a negative impact on ovulation. Plus, workouts help boost the flow of oxygen-rich blood around the body, including to your pelvic area (no bad thing if you’re prone to getting a wander of warning: extreme exercise – especially if it results in low body weight – can upset your hormonal balance and disrupt ovulation. So lay off the double marathons for now.