

# Vaginal Rejuvenation, Labiaplasty, and Other Female Genital Cosmetic Surgery

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## Frequently Asked Questions

### What does a normal vulva look like?

The external female [genital](#) area is called the [vulva](#) . There is not one normal or correct way for the vulva to look. The size, shape, and color of the vulva varies widely from person to person. The [labia minora](#) often extend past the [labia majora](#) , but it also is okay if they do not. Some people have [labia](#) that are uneven in size. All of these differences are expected. It also is typical for the size, shape, and color of the vulva to change during [puberty](#) , as you age, and during pregnancy or [menopause](#) .

### What is female genital cosmetic surgery?

This surgery changes the look or feel of female genitals, such as the labia and [vagina](#) . As with all cosmetic surgery, female genital cosmetic surgery is not done based on a medical need. This surgery is done based on your personal preference, though it comes with serious potential risks.

### I'm worried about how my genitals look. Should I have surgery?

Talk with your [obstetrician–gynecologist \(ob-gyn\)](#) if you have concerns about your genitals. Genital size, shape, and color are different in every person. There is no right or wrong way for genitals to look.

There also is no good research to show that female genital cosmetic surgeries are safe or work well. Some ads can mislead people about what is possible with surgery or what is normal for the body. There is no evidence that these surgeries will improve your [libido](#) (sex drive), body image, or sexual pleasure. Genital cosmetic surgeries also can cause serious physical problems.

## What are the types of female genital cosmetic surgery?

Labiaplasty is the most common type of this surgery. Labiaplasty can make the labia smaller or give both sides the same shape. Other types of female genital cosmetic surgery include

- clitoral hood reduction, which makes the covering of the [clitoris](#) smaller (usually done at the same time as labiaplasty)
- vaginoplasty, which is marketed as a way to tighten the walls of the vagina
- perineoplasty, which is marketed as a way to strengthen the [perineum](#)

You also may have heard of “vaginal rejuvenation.” Sometimes this term is used to describe all female genital cosmetic surgery in general, but usually it refers to vaginoplasty, perineoplasty, or both. This is a marketing term, not a medical term.

Female genital cosmetic surgeries are not proven to be safe or effective. Genital cosmetic surgeries also have serious risks (see below).

## What are laser and other energy treatments for "vaginal rejuvenation"?

You may see energy-based treatments marketed as non-surgical options for vaginal rejuvenation. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has not approved any laser or other energy-based treatment for vaginal cosmetic surgery. These treatments also have not been approved for treating menopause symptoms, [urinary incontinence](#), or other sexual problems.

The FDA has warned that laser and other energy-based treatments for vaginal rejuvenation can cause serious [complications](#). These can include vaginal burns, scarring, pain with sex, and long-lasting pain.

## What are the risks of female genital cosmetic surgery?

Risks of surgery can include

- pain
- bleeding
- infection
- scarring
- changes in sensation
- [dyspareunia](#) (painful sex)
- the need for more surgeries

## Is female genital cosmetic surgery legal?

Federal law makes genital cosmetic surgery illegal for girls under age 18. Labiaplasty may be legal for girls under 18 if they have a medical problem, such as a [birth defect](#) or labia pain.

In some states, labiaplasty and other genital cosmetic surgery also may be illegal for adults. Sometimes genital cosmetic surgery is considered a kind of “female genital mutilation.” Learn the laws on female genital mutilation in your state at [www.equalitynow.org/us\\_laws\\_against\\_fgm\\_state\\_by\\_state](http://www.equalitynow.org/us_laws_against_fgm_state_by_state).

## Is female genital surgery ever medically necessary?

Sometimes surgery is needed to repair childbirth injuries or other types of injuries. Some types of surgery also are used to treat problems that can cause painful sex, such as [vulvodynia](#) (see [When Sex is Painful](#)). Other reasons genital surgery might be done include

- problems caused by athletic activities
- repair of female genital cutting
- gender affirmation surgery

## How can I improve sexual satisfaction without surgery?

There are many other ways to improve sexual satisfaction. Learning more about your body and how it works may help. If you have a partner, building better communication with them may help too. You also can talk with your ob-gyn or other health care professional about ways to address specific problems. Medication, physical therapy, counseling, and many self-help options are available. See [Your Sexual Health](#) for more information.

## If I want female genital cosmetic surgery, what should I ask my surgeon?

Ask your surgeon to explain the following:

- Possible risks of surgery and how often problems happen.
- Their experience with the surgery you may have. (How many of the surgeries have they done? What results did their patients have?)

## What is body dysmorphic disorder?

Some people have a mental health condition called body dysmorphic disorder. People with this disorder think their bodies have physical defects that do not really exist, or they worry obsessively about minor flaws that others wouldn't notice. If your surgeon or ob-gyn thinks you may have this disorder, they may ask you to see a specialist for evaluation before you have cosmetic surgery.

## Glossary

**Birth Defect:** A physical problem that is present at birth.

**Complications:** Diseases or conditions that happen as a result of another disease or condition. An example is pneumonia that occurs as a result of the flu. A complication also can occur as a result of a condition, such as pregnancy. An example of a pregnancy complication is preterm labor.

**Clitoris:** A female sex organ found near the opening of the vagina.

**Dyspareunia:** Pain with intercourse.

**Genital:** A sexual or reproductive organ.

**Labia:** Folds of skin on either side of the opening of the vagina.

**Labia Majora:** The outer folds of tissue of the external female genital area.

**Labia Minora:** The inner folds of tissue of the external female genital area.

**Libido:** The desire for, or interest in, sex. Also called sex drive.

**Menopause:** The time when a woman's menstrual periods stop permanently.

Menopause is confirmed after 1 year of no periods.

**Obstetrician–Gynecologist (Ob-Gyn):** A doctor with special training and education in women's health.

**Perineum:** The area between the vagina and the anus.

**Puberty:** The stage of life when the reproductive organs start to function and other sex features develop. For women, this is the time when menstrual periods start and the breasts develop.

**Urinary Incontinence:** Involuntary loss of urine.

**Vagina:** A tube-like structure surrounded by muscles. The vagina leads from the uterus to the outside of the body.

**Vulvodynia:** Pain in the vulva that does not go away or keeps coming back and does not have a specific cause.

**Vulva:** The external female genital area.

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If you have further questions, contact your ob-gyn.

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