



University Hospitals Bristol
NHS Foundation Trust

Patient Information Service
St Michael's Hospital

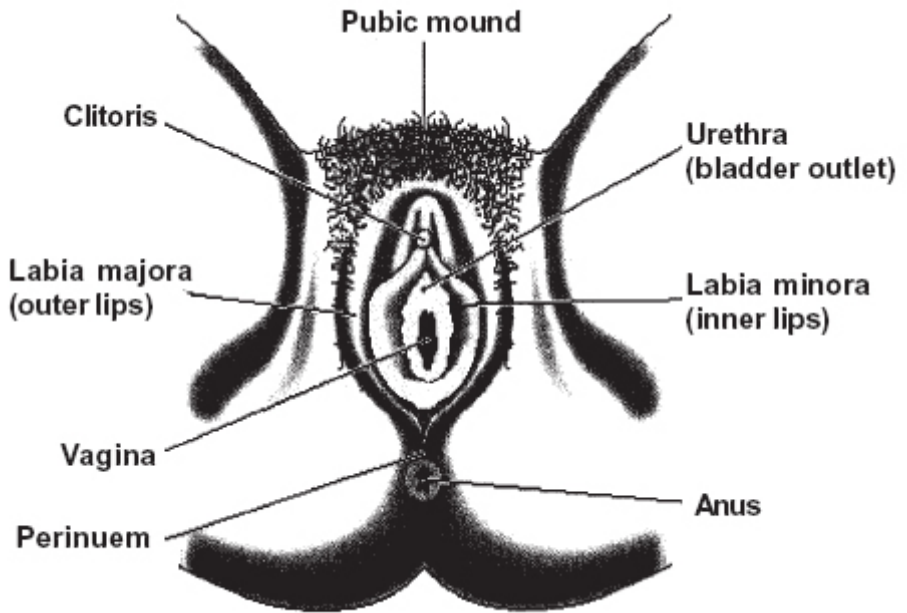
Female genital appearance: what is normal?



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Variation in the appearance of labia minora:



All of these vulvas are entirely normal

Genitalia in the media

Although female nudity is now common in the media (particularly the pornography industry), accurate representations of female genitalia are rare.

Changing habits such as shaving and waxing pubic hair can irritate sensitive skin and also make the labia more visible.

What to do if you think your vulva is abnormal

See your GP who may refer you to a gynaecologist (women's health doctor).

The majority of the time you will be reassured you are normal and will not require any treatment.

Cosmetic genital surgery

This surgery is not generally available on the NHS.

Surgery available privately includes labiaplasty (labia reduction surgery), clitoral reduction and liposuction amongst others.

There is no long term evidence that surgery improves physical or psychological symptoms.

All surgery involves risks, including:

- bleeding
- infection.

With labiaplasty:

- there will be a scar
- scarring may reduce sensation although this is yet to be proven
- up to 7% of women require further surgery because of complications
- some women will feel unhappy with the outcome
- the surgery cannot be undone.

Interesting resources:

BBC news article. 'New warning on "perfect vaginas:"'

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8352711.stm>

The image 'Variation in the appearance of labia minora' is used with permission from the paper:

Lloyd J, Crouch NS, Minto CL, Liao LM, Creighton SM. Female genital appearance: 'normality' unfolds. *BJOG* 2005; 112: 643-646

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