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Female Genital Plastic and Cosmetic Surgery

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EDITED BY

Michael P. Goodman MD, FACOG, AAACS, IF, NCMP, CCD

Caring for Women Wellness Center
Davis, CA, USA

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Editorial Offices

9600 Garsington Road, Oxford, OX4 2DQ, UK

The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, UK

111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774, USA

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Contents

List of contributors, vi

Preface, vii

Acknowledgments, viii

1 Introduction, 1

Michael P. Goodman

2 Genital plastics: the history of development, 3

Michael P. Goodman

3 Anatomic considerations, 9

*Orawee Chinthakanan, Robert D. Moore,
and John R. Miklos*

4 Definitions, 25

Michael P. Goodman

5 Philosophy, rationale, and patient selection, 31

Michael P. Goodman

6 Ethical considerations of female genital plastic/
cosmetic surgery, 39

Andrew T. Goldstein and Sarah L. Jutrzonka

7 Patient protection and pre-operative
assessment, 45

Michael P. Goodman

8 Surgical procedures I: vulva and mons pubis, 51

*Michael P. Goodman, with contributions from
David Matlock, Alex Simopoulos, Bernard H. Stern,
and Otto J. Placik*

9 Surgical procedures II: perineoplasty, vaginoplasty,
colpoperineoplasty (“vaginal rejuvenation”), 88

*Robert D. Moore, John R. Miklos,
and Orawee Chinthakanan*

10 The biomechanics and physiology of clitoral
and vaginally activated orgasm: impact of
vaginal tightening operations, 102

Michael P. Goodman

11 The G-spot, 108

Dudley Robinson and Linda Cardozo

12 Post-operative care, 112

Michael P. Goodman

13 Aesthetic male-to-female transsexual surgery, 120

Marci Bowers

14 Anesthetic choices and office-based surgery, 131

Michael P. Goodman

15 Non-surgical cosmetic vulvovaginal
procedures, 138

Gustavo Leibaschoff and Pablo Gonzalez Isaza

16 Surgical risks and untoward outcomes, 154

Otto J. Placik

17 Revisions and re-operations, 186

Michael P. Goodman

18 Psychosexual issues, 200

Michael P. Goodman

19 Outcomes, 206

Michael P. Goodman

20 Pearls for practice, 212

Michael P. Goodman

21 Standards of care, 215

Michael P. Goodman

Index, 222

List of contributors

Marci Bowers

Director, Division of Transgender Surgery
Mills-Peninsula Hospital
Burlingame, CA, USA

Linda Cardozo OBE, MD, FRCOG

Professor of Urogynaecology
King's College Hospital
London, UK

Orawee Chinthakanan MD, MPH

International Urogynecology Associates of
Atlanta and Beverly Hills
Vaginal Rejuvenation Center of Atlanta
Atlanta Medical Research, Inc.
Alpharetta (Atlanta), GA, USA

Andrew T. Goldstein MD, FACOG, IF

Director, the Centers for Vulvovaginal Disorders
Washington, DC; New York, NY;
Clinical Professor, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology
The George Washington University School of Medicine
Washington, DC, USA

Pablo Gonzalez Isaza MD

Division of Urogynecology and Pelvic
Reconstructive Surgery
Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology Hospital
Universitario San Jorge, Pereira, Colombia

Michael P. Goodman

Caring for Women Wellness Center, Davis, CA, USA

Sarah L. Jutrzonka PhD

Pacific Graduate School of Psychology
Palo Alto University, Palo Alto, CA, USA

Gustavo Leibaschoff MD

General Secretary, World Society of Cosmetic Gynecology
President, International Union of Lipoplasty
Dallas, TX, USA

David Matlock MD, MBA, FACOG

Medical Director
Laser Vaginal Rejuvenation Institute of America
Co-Medical Director, Laser Vaginal Rejuvenation Institute
of Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA, USA

John R. Miklos MD, FACOG, FACS, FPMRS

Director, Urogynecology
International Urogynecology Associates of Atlanta
and Beverly Hills
Adjunct Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology
Emory University
Atlanta, GA, USA
Vaginal Rejuvenation Center of Atlanta
Atlanta Medical Research, Inc.
Alpharetta (Atlanta), GA, USA

Robert D. Moore DO, FACOG, FACS, FPMRS

Director, Advanced Pelvic Surgery
International Urogynecological Associates of
Atlanta and Beverly Hills
Adjunct Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology,
Emory University
Atlanta, GA, USA
Vaginal Rejuvenation Center of Atlanta
Atlanta Medical Research, Inc.
Alpharetta (Atlanta), GA, USA

Otto J. Placik MD, FACS

Assistant Professor of Clinical Surgery (Plastic)
Northwestern University Feinberg School of
Medicine, Chicago, IL, USA
Principal Investigator, DeNova Research
Chicago, IL, USA

Dudley Robinson MD, FRCOG

Consultant Urogynaecologist and Honorary Senior Lecturer
Department of Urogynaecology
King's College Hospital
London, UK

Alex Simopoulos

MD, FACOG
FPA Women's Health
Los Angeles, CA, USA

Bernard H. Stern

MD, FACOG
Aesthetic Plastic Surgery International
Alexandria, VA, USA
Aventura Center for Cosmetic Surgery
Elite Plastic Surgery
Aventura FL, USA
Baftis Plastic Surgery
Jupiter, FL, USA

Preface

A woman has the opportunity to request alteration of her vulva and/or vagina for a variety of reasons. Clinicians in the office hear of cosmetic and self-esteem rationale, as well as functional complaints. Regarding the vulva, distress with the appearance of “flaps” or “elephant ears” or other protrusions beyond the labia majora; self-consciousness; and distress over potential prominence or slippage of hypertrophic labia from beyond the confines of thong-type undergarments or swimwear predominate on websites, blogs, and office commentary. Discomfort (“chafing”) with sports, sexual, and other activities; discomfort with tight clothing; necessity to “re-arrange” the labia for sexual intimacy; and hygienic difficulties predominate functional complaints heard in the office. Redundant labia majora are described as “droopy,” or the patient dismays over the appearance of “camel toe.”

Sexual issues dominate pelvic floor complaints in women inquiring about a vaginal tightening procedure. They describe a “sensation of wide/smooth vagina” (a term popularized by Jack Pardo S. from Chile and Adam Ostrzenski from the United States) with secondary diminishment of friction, less sensation, and greater difficulty achieving orgasm, at times concomitant with displeasure regarding the visual appearance of the introitus.

Size-reducing labia minoraplasty and/or majoraplasty (LP-m; LP-M), size reduction of redundant clitoral hood folds (RCH), posterior colporrhaphy/perineoplasty (PP), and anterior colporrhaphy/vaginoplasty (VP), the latter two colloquially termed “vaginal rejuvenation” (VRJ), are increasingly common women’s cosmetic genital surgical procedures and have been subject to scrutiny both in the press and by investigators and editorialists. Another genital plastic procedure, hymenoplasty (HP), is usually performed for religious and cultural reasons, although occasionally requested as a “gift” for one’s sexual partner.

In this text, the first to concentrate on plastic and cosmetic procedures specifically designed for elective comfort, self-esteem, and sexuality reasons, the procedures themselves, their rationale and risks, what is presently known regarding outcome, ethical considerations, and psychosexual considerations are discussed. The importance of proper and adequate surgical and sexual medicine training for surgeons is emphasized, along with the specific anatomic adjustments and psychosexual outcomes produced by these procedures.

The specific surgical procedures are defined and described. The importance of proper patient selection and preparation and adequate patient protection are reviewed, along with reminders of the intensely sexual nature of this work and the importance of counseling patients regarding their personal normality, while at the same time acknowledging their right to seek reconstruction.

Above all, this text hopes to familiarize the gynecologic, the plastic and reconstructive, and the cosmetic surgeon with a crucially important area of a woman’s body, the intensity of her concentration and concern about the appearance and function of the area, and the availability and potential pitfalls of methods, predominantly surgical at this time, designed to meet her stated goals. We, your editor, associate editors, and contributors, intend to help raise your awareness of the issue and begin to explore the territories entered with an understanding of women’s body image, feelings about their genitalia, and surgical and non-surgical options to safely and effectively achieve personal goals.

Michael P. Goodman
Davis, CA, USA

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First and foremost, I wish to acknowledge Drs. Marco Pelosi II and III and Dr. Red Alinsod. The vision, perseverance, and educational efforts of these friends have resulted in the education and training of hundreds of genital plastic and cosmetic surgeons who are far more likely to accomplish success rather than failure for their patients. They are fine surgeons and educators.

Of course I am indebted to each and every one of the authors and associate editors (especially my friend Dr. Otto Placik) who have worked their backsides off on this project, and without whose efforts this unique book would not be before you. I am personally indebted to Dr. Gary Alter, from whose 1998 publication I initially learned the labiaplasty technique of modified V-wedge, and Dr. David Matlock, from whom a few years later I learned proper technique for curvilinear resection, and who has carefully trained hundreds of genital plastic/cosmetic surgeons. They are pioneers in the field.

Martin Sugden, publisher of the Scientific Textbook Division at Wiley, is my mentor in this book, Pri Gibbons

and Jasmine Chang is my editor and Radjan Lourde Selvanadin is the project manager. They both have worked “above and beyond.” An author could not ask for a more knowledgeable, flexible, and easy to work with pair of professionals.

I offer my thanks to my family, my friends, especially my son, Sam, from whom I was aloof during the full-term gestation of this project. They all hope this is the termination of my writing—at least for a while!

I thank my professional, empathetic, kind, and flexible office staff. Nicole Sanders is our patient care coordinator, office manager, and first assistant. Raechel Davis is our receptionist and first assistant. Elise Eisele and Heather Kochner were our surgical nurses during this text’s gestation. There is absolutely no way I could practice genital plastic surgery without this crew!

And last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank my patients. These intrepid and trusting (!!) souls, women on a mission, wonderfully weave through this text, which would not exist without them.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Michael P. Goodman

Caring for Women Wellness Center, Davis, CA, USA

The time is the time. After the time is sometimes the time. Before the time is never the time.

Francois Sagan

Female genital plastic/cosmetic surgery (FGPS), aka female cosmetic genital surgery (FCGS), vulvovaginal aesthetic surgery (VVAS), aesthetic (vulvo)vaginal surgery (AVS), or cosmeto-plastic gynecology (CPG), has mounted the stage of twentieth-century cosmesis. Adding in the promise of improvement in sexual function makes for an intriguing debut.

As this elective plastic/cosmetic surgical discipline, like many novel surgical and medical disciplines, traces its genesis to a community rather than academic setting, the succession of different but related names have mirrored the semantic directions of individuals and subspecialty organizations. Although any of the terms noted above will do, for the purposes of this textbook the quite descriptive term FGPS will be utilized.

As women become more comfortable with the idea of elective procedures on their faces, breasts, skin, and so forth designed to enhance their appearance and self-confidence, it is not surprising that they may wish to alter, change, “rejuvenate,” or reconstruct even more intimate areas of their bodies [1].

Although surgeons for years have unofficially performed surgical procedures resulting in alterations in genital size, appearance, and function (labial size alteration, perineorrhaphy, anterior/posterior colporrhaphy, intersex and transsexual surgical procedures, and alterations on children and adolescents for benign enlargements of the labia minora), Honore and O’Hara in 1978 [2], Hodgekinson and Hait in 1984 [3], and

Chavis, LaFeria, and Niccolini in 1989 [4] were the first to discuss genital surgical alterations performed on adults for purely aesthetic reasons. While there are at present no accurate and ongoing published statistics from either the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, American Academy of Cosmetic Surgeons, or American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, it has become apparent in the lay press that aesthetic surgery of the vulva and vagina is gaining significantly in popularity. As far back as 2004, Dr. V. Leroy Young, chair of the emerging trends task force of the Arlington Heights, Illinois, American Society of Plastic Surgeons, commented in a personal communication that he felt that “labiaplasty and vaginal cosmetic surgery are the fastest growing emerging growth trend in cosmetic plastic surgery.”

Aesthetic surgery of the vulva and vagina has heretofore not been officially described as such, nor “sanctioned” by specialty organizations, as they are community rather than university or academically driven. The operations themselves, however, are really not new; the only new thing is the concept that women may individually wish to alter their external genitalia for appearance or functional reasons, or tighten the vaginal barrel to enhance their sexual pleasure. However, since any surgery has potential for causing morbidity including pain and distress (both physical and psychological) if not performed properly, and especially since FGPS involves concepts and procedures that are not yet fully researched

nor understood, guidelines for training, surgical technique, and patient selection should be discussed.

This textbook will give an overview of the most commonly performed procedures: labiaplasty of the minora and majora (LP-m; LP-M), size reduction of redundant clitoral hood epithelium (RCH), clitoral hood exposure for symptomatic phimosis (RCH-p), perineoplasty (PP), vaginoplasty (VP), colpoperineoplasty (CP; a combination of VP and PP), and hymenoplasty (HP), and will discuss rationale for surgery, ethical issues, patient expectations, patient selection and patient protection, complications, training issues, psychosexual issues, the procedures themselves, and all presently available outcome data. “Vaginal rejuvenation” (VRJ), a slippery and colloquial—although frequently used—term used to mean elective VP, PP, and/or CP (and for some, even LP) will be discussed.

First performed by community gynecologists or plastic surgeons in response to occasional patient requests in the mid-/late 1990s and early 2000s, by the mid-2000s the alternative of surgical alteration or reconstruction for “enlarged” labia/clitoral hood, and vaginal operations geared primarily to a goal of tightening for reasons of enhancement of sexual satisfaction, became more widely available and a subject of comment, blog, search, and consultation.

Although certainly the vulva and vagina are areas under the purview of gynecology and gynecologic training, *virtually no training* is offered in OB/GYN residencies in plastic technique, cosmetic labiaplasty, or pelvic floor surgery designed specifically for enhancement of female sexual pleasure (see Chapter 21). With the subject adequately addressed by only a portion of plastic surgery residencies (and in these, usually LP/RCH only), an individual patient finds herself on her own when endeavoring to navigate a path to successful reconstruction. With little guidance from specialty or regulatory agencies, “caveat emptor” became the rule, and un- or undertrained surgeons began performing these plastic procedures, frequently with less-than-optimal, and occasionally disastrous, results.

A textbook cannot substitute for a teaching program, observation of proper technique, and actual performance of procedures with expert proctoring. However, this text will point the way and provide guidance toward those

ends. It is designed to be a complete teaching guide to be used concomitantly with a hands-on teaching program, designed to develop competency leading to proficiency for female patients putting their trust in the hands of their gynecologic, plastic, or cosmetic surgeon. It is intended to educate the uninitiated and point the way toward the goal of comfort working with—psychologically, sexually, physiologically, and surgically—women who desire a guide to help them achieve their cosmetic, functional, sexual, and psychological goals.

After an introduction to the relatively brief “history” of the surgical specialty and discussion of pertinent anatomy, and after a thorough discussion of patient rationale for surgery, elements of patient protection, and the relevant ethical issues involved, the specifics of the most commonly utilized surgical techniques for both vulvar and vaginal procedures will be dissected and discussed in detail. Following this, patient selection technique and the biomechanics and physiology of tightening operations as they relate to the female orgasmic cascade will be discussed in depth. After a review of surgical risks, individual chapters will be devoted to important topics such as choice of anesthesia, surgical venue, complication avoidance, transgender surgery, and the important topic of revisions and re-operations. The book continues with in-depth discussions of psychosexual issues, up-to-date outcome data, and a chapter devoted entirely to brief “pearls” involving physician and patient protection. The editor’s suggestions for implementing training programs and minimal “standards of care” will conclude the book.

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CHAPTER 2

Genital plastics: the history of development

Michael P. Goodman

Caring for Women Wellness Center, Davis, CA, USA

With a contribution from David Matlock

The only reason some people get lost in thought is because it's unfamiliar territory.

Paul Fix

Documented since the time of the pharaohs in ancient Egypt, women throughout history have modified their genitalia via adornments, devices, colorations, bleaches, and reductive and expansive techniques.

Although gynecologic surgeons have for years performed surgical procedures resulting in alterations in genital size, appearance, and function (repairs after obstetrical delivery, perineorrhaphy, anterior/posterior colporrhaphy, intersex and transsexual surgical procedures), in addition to reductions for pediatric labial hypertrophy, Honore and O'Hara in 1978, Hodgekinson and Hait in 1984, and Chavis, LaFeria, and Niccolini in 1989 were the first to discuss genital surgical alterations performed for aesthetic and/or sexual reasons (see references 2–4 in Chapter 1).

Traditionally taught in OB/GYN residencies as surgical procedures designed for symptomatic pelvic floor herniations of bladder, urethra, rectum, or peritoneal cavity, but never proposed as a sexual-enhancing surgical procedure, traditional anterior and posterior “repairs” (colporrhaphies) are being adapted to improve sexual function by strengthening the pelvic floor and tightening the vaginal barrel to produce greater friction and vaginal wall pressure. This “shifting” of indications and modification of traditional gynecologic surgery primarily for reasons of enhancement of sexual function has not been without controversy, as gynecologic academic organizations such as the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) have officially decried this representation [1].

In step with ACOG, the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada (SOGC) published its Policy Statement No. 300, December 2013 [2], in which they opine that the literature “does not support non-medically indicated female cosmetic surgery procedures considering the available evidence of efficacy and safety.” This document appears to be a modification of the ACOG Opinion No. 378, September 2007, referenced above and, as was the ACOG opinion, was written by non-community academics, few if any of whom have any experience in the field of genital plastics or the benefit of consultation with or study of women seeking genital cosmetic care.

The same SOGC document advises practitioners in Canada that “Physicians who choose to undertake cosmetic procedures to the vagina and vulva should be appropriately trained in the gynaecologic and/or plastic surgery aspects of cosmetic surgery of the lower genital tract.”

Although multiple articles describing vulvar labiaplasty technique, along with small retrospective case series, are available in the literature from the late 1980s onward (3–15), it was not until the early twenty-first century that procedures designed specifically for reduction of labial and clitoral hood size, narrowing of the hymenal aperture, and increasing vaginal wall pressure by surgical narrowing of the vagina were widely publicized in the lay press and online. As an extension of “women’s liberation” and the owning of her own sexuality, and with the advent of social sharing

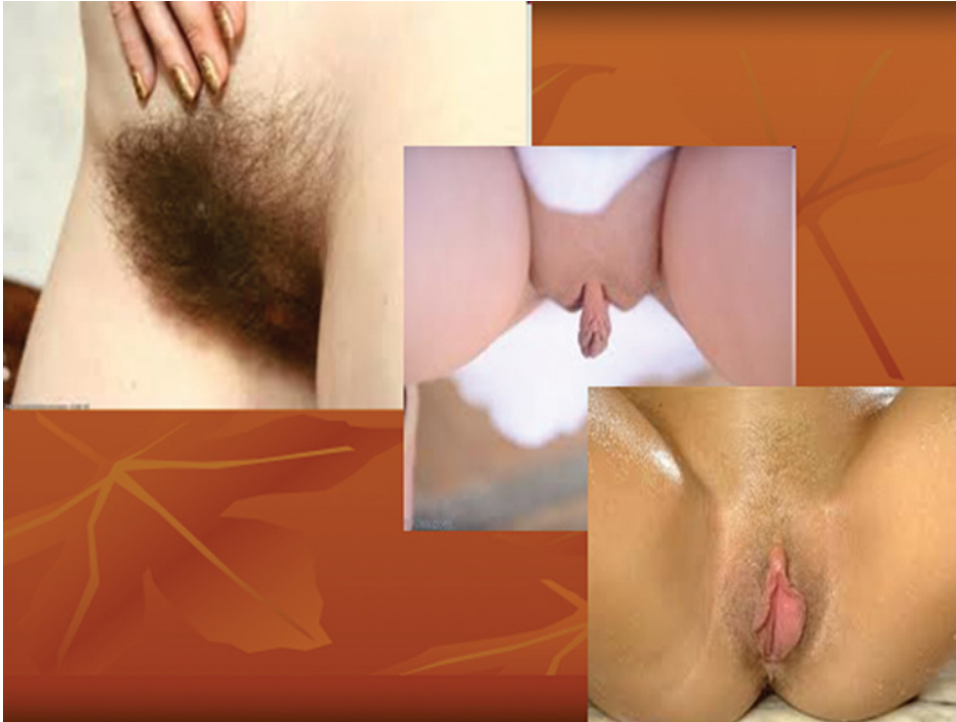


Figure 2.1 Visibility and “cushioning” of vulvar structures. Source: Michael P. Goodman. Reproduced with permission.

sites, more vulvar visibility secondary to various depilation techniques (Figure 2.1), and wishing to improve one’s self-image to “feel more comfortable in her own skin,” women in increasing numbers are seeking vulvar and vaginal aesthetic and plastic modifications.

While no “official” statistics on the varied FGPS procedures are kept by either the American Academy of Cosmetic Surgeons, the British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons, or the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS), the ASPS did note a 30% increase in “VRJ” procedures between 2005 and 2006 (793 to 1,030) but did not keep statistics beyond 2006 (16). The American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (ASAPS) kept demographic data for “VRJ” procedures in 2007 and found that of 4,505 procedures noted, 38.1% were in the 19–34 age group, 54.4% age 35–50, 2.4% 18 and under, and 5.1% 51 and older (17). According to the ASAPS 2012 statistics presented at their 2013 annual meeting, over 3,500 vaginal rejuvenation (CP, VRJ, PP) procedures were performed, representing a 64% increase from 2011. Informal polls of high-volume genital plastic/cosmetic surgeons by the editors of the journal of the ASAPS, along with the increase in volume of liability actions referable

to genital cosmetic surgery, suggest a continued rise in the public’s interest in these procedures. Although, in this author’s estimation, obstetrician-gynecologists perform a volume equal to that of plastic surgeons, gynecology specialty organizations have taken no interest in promoting these procedures in any way, including keeping statistics involving numbers performed annually by their members. I suspect both plastic surgery and OB/GYN societies would be surprised at the actual volume.

Mirzabeigi *et al.* in 2009 surveyed members of the ASPS via electronic mail (18); 750 surgeons responded (a 19.7% response rate.) Although selection bias very likely increased the rate, 51% of the sample currently offered labiaplasty, and responding members performed a total of 2,255 procedures in the previous 2 years (2007, 2008).

A major milestone in the development of surgical technique was reported in the 1998 article by Gary Alter, MD (8), describing the “modified V-wedge” procedure for reducing labial volume. Developed in response to the often poor cosmetic appearance and edge sensitivity noted by many patients receiving a linear resection-based labiaplasty performed with large-caliber suture and

often a continuous running suture technique, Alter's procedure, although requiring a longer learning curve and representing an increased risk of wound disruption, offered the promise of better cosmetic appearance and little risk of neurological alteration, a potential benefit not proven by prospective research.

Instruction in plastic tissue handling and suturing technique and the specific procedures of cosmetic labiaplasty and aesthetic hood reduction, as well as sexual pleasure-enhancing perineoplasty, is absent from virtually all OB/GYN residency programs. Cosmetic labiaplasty technique is taught in only a percentage of plastic surgery residencies (and pelvic floor surgery rarely taught). Due to the lack of training in academic centers, it was inevitable that community surgeons would respond to the emerging and burgeoning demand for cosmetic female genital procedures. Unfortunately, many gynecologists, by virtue of being vaginal surgeons and having observed or performed a limited number of extirpative labial techniques (for in situ or invasive malignancies) in residency, feel that they are equipped to perform both labial reductive and vaginal floor-tightening procedures for reasons of enhancing sexual pleasure. Although gynecologists are trained in pelvic floor restoration, they are undereducated in the use of these surgical techniques specifically for sexual indications. The reality is that, in the absence of any meaningful instruction in careful plastic technique, or instruction in aesthetic labiaplasty or sexuality-oriented vaginoplasty/perineoplasty, general gynecologists, as well as a large percentage of plastic surgeons, are ill equipped to perform these procedures. Academic physicians, most recently Cheryl Iglesia, MD [19], who write editorials, "regulations," and "practice advisories," are also not specifically trained and/or experienced in these procedures and appear to shun what they do not understand.

In his own words, Dr. David Matlock, one of FGPS's early pioneers, describes his seminal experience.

The history of the development of female genital plastic and cosmetic surgery

David Matlock

My path in FGPS started in 1996. In general, my interest in cosmetic surgery started in 1987 with the implementation of liposuction into my gynecology practice. The tumescent liposuction technique revolutionized liposuction and eventually was employed in other procedures including breast reductions performed via tumescent liposuction. During this time, I was also interested in the

emerging trend of laser technologies for surgery. I took as many hands-on laser courses as available and read the latest textbooks. It wasn't long before I had a desire to apply this cosmetic and laser knowledge to vaginal surgery. My goal at the time was to restore form, function, and appearance.

To formulate my knowledge base and surgical technique I reviewed research papers and pertinent chapters of *Gray's Anatomy*, *Te Linde's Operative Gynecology*, and *Grabb and Smith's Plastic Surgery*. The objective was to extrapolate from scientific knowledge and formulate a procedure consistent with the goals of enhancing form, function, and aesthetic appearance. The vulvovaginal structures of young nulliparous patients in my practice served as a model to emulate in surgery. A big part of cosmetic surgery is restoring youth or creating a more youthful appearance. I took a common gynecologic procedure, anterior, posterior colporrhaphy and perineorrhaphy, with well-documented outcomes, efficacy, risk, and complications and modified it to accomplish cosmetic and sexual objectives. The modifications included a tumescent solution infiltration of the vaginal mucosa, a 980 nm diode laser to perform all the cutting and dissecting, plastic surgery suturing techniques, attention to detail and alignment of structures (hymenal ring, ends of the labia minora and outer border of the labia majora). The patients were also given a pudendal block with 0.5% Marcaine with epinephrine, which provided prolonged post-op pain-control anesthesia. I felt the purpose of the procedure would be better served if I thought more like a plastic surgeon than a gynecologist.

My first case was a 42-year-old G4 P4 with mild stress urinary incontinence and a POP 2 cystourethrocele and rectocele. She was consented for an anterior, posterior colporrhaphy and perineorrhaphy. Her surgery and post-operative course were uneventful. Shortly after resuming normal sexual activity the patient and her husband called me and she said, "Sex is great now." The patient's husband went on to say, "It is like having the same wife, but a new woman." I didn't make much of it at the time. Instead, I kind of filed it away in the back of my mind.

Shortly after this, the patient's friend came in requesting the same procedure because her friend had reported improved sex. This patient was 38 years old with three children. She noted that her sexual gratification had diminished with the birth of each subsequent child. She stated that she didn't have a functional problem such as stress urinary incontinence, rather wanted the procedure to enhance sexual gratification. After careful thought and consideration, I ultimately performed the procedure and achieved similar results as with the first patient. This second patient reported enhancement of sexual gratification for her and her partner. Shortly thereafter, I coined the term Laser Vaginal Rejuvenation (LVR).

Over time, more and more patients came in requesting LVR for enhancement of sexual gratification. It eventually became clear to me that a true need existed for this type of procedure. Prior to launching a program, I wanted to

establish parameters to avoid going against the grain of the “medical establishment.” These were as follows:

- The procedures were viewed as strictly cosmetic, fee for service, not covered by insurance.
- As with any cosmetic surgery (breast augmentation, breast reduction, liposuction, rhinoplasty, blepharoplasty, etc.), LVR is more about lifestyle, personal preference, and choice.
- Patients had to request the surgery under their own volition. If they were coerced, influenced, or forced, the surgery would be denied.
- If patients had body dysmorphism syndrome, psychological disorders, sexual dysfunction, pelvic pain, unrealistic expectations, and so forth, the procedure would be denied.
- If the patient wanted the procedure to produce vaginal orgasms due to the fact that she only experienced clitoral orgasms, the procedure would be denied. It would also be explained to the patient that perhaps this was normal for her. I wanted to convey that the procedure was for the enhancement of sexual gratification, which among other things is directly related to the amount of frictional forces generated. This was a clinical observation.
- The environment had to be one where patients felt comfortable in opening up to discuss their medical, physical, sexual, and social self.
- Patients’ participation in their healthcare and surgical design was strongly encouraged. In the final portion of the consultation, patients were given a mirror and were shown what the procedure entailed.
- The husband/partner was encouraged to be present during the consultation, if the woman so desired.
- A mission statement was developed: Our mission is to empower women with knowledge, choice and alternatives.
- Medical legal concerns: I collaborated with a healthcare attorney to devise a comprehensive informed consent document.

My launch strategy initially involved marketing and media, feeling additionally that research on a new procedure/technique/concept, and so forth is to be done as soon as feasible. Like most new procedures (e.g., laparoscopic hysterectomy) time is required to build caseloads and surgical experience before embarking on research. I felt that it was more prudent to help create awareness among physicians and patients and in so doing caseloads could be developed and ultimately research would be done. I also felt that I was on solid ground since LVR was based upon a standard existing surgical procedure.

I went on and placed an ad in a weekly newspaper. Over time, the practice was inundated with calls, consultations, and surgeries. I had to pull the ad because I couldn’t keep up with the demand.

Local, national, and international media began requesting interviews on the subject matter. Additionally, patients started requesting reduction of their labia minora and the excess prepuce. I approached each request with literature searches, extensive review of the anatomy, and lab work on animal models (pig ears). I continued until I successfully

developed a laser reduction labioplasty with the reduction of the excess prepuce and named this technique Designer Laser Vaginoplasty (DLV). Each of the procedures was developed based upon the request of women. All of the procedures were developed with systems and methods in mind, so that they could easily be reproduced and taught to other surgeons. The procedures are as follows:

- [laser reduction] labioplasty of the labia minora;
- reduction of the excess prepuce;
- [laser reduction] labioplasty of the labia majora via a vertical elliptical incision;
- [laser] perineoplasty as a modification of posterior colporrhaphy;
- liposuction of the fatty mons pubis and superior aspect of the labia majora;
- augmentation of the labia majora via autologous fat transfer;
- supra-pubic lift of the vulvar structures;
- [laser] hymenoplasty.

Around 1998, I started getting calls from gynecologists from around the country inquiring about a training program. This was something I had not thought about. While pursuing a healthcare executive MBA program at the University of California at Irvine, I developed a training program with the assistance of my professors and fellow graduate students. By the time I matriculated in 2000, I had a comprehensive business plan to launch a training program called the Laser Vaginal Rejuvenation Institute of America. The course would be three days in length and include eight hours of didactics, a full day of intraoperative observation of the procedures, and a day in the inanimate lab. The lab was where the surgeons would perform all of the procedures on animal models. As of 2013, 411 surgeons including gynecologists, plastic surgeons, and urologists from over 46 countries have been trained.

I have had the privilege of treating patients from all 50 states and over 65 countries. As predicted, FGPS has been brought into the mainstream. Surgeons are performing the procedures throughout the world and the research is flowing!

Politically, the waters remain muddy. Although a robust literature regarding the rationale, safety, and effectiveness of genital plastic/cosmetic procedures exists, and is quoted extensively throughout this text, this literature apparently “disappears” for the authors of “official positions” for the hierarchy of some specialty organizations. ACOG, the organization purporting to represent OB/GYNs, made clear their opinion, discussed above, in 2007. Their position was further discussed in 2012 as a “College Statement of Policy” (“The Role of the Obstetrician-Gynecologist in Cosmetic Procedures”) [20], where they opined that “Obstetrician-gynecologists who offer procedure typically provided by other specialists should possess

an equivalent level of competence,” and that “the obstetrician-gynecologist must be knowledgeable of the ethics of patient counselling and informed consent.” This opinion finds no argument from your editor. However, they also advise that “Special care must be taken when patients are considering procedures in a effort to enhance sexual appearance and function, as female sexual response has been shown to be an intricate process determined predominantly by brain function and psychosocial factors, not by genital appearance.” As discussed and referenced especially in Chapter 17 in this text, the authors of this statement have not been diligent in their research, as there is a robust literature (21–26) showing exactly the opposite: that female sexual response, while admittedly complex, *is* certainly influenced by genital appearance.

Further “guidance” has been forthcoming from ACOG, following up on their 2007 statement of “caution.” In regards to vaginal tightening procedures [1], a new Committee Opinion, replacing a 2008 statement on non-traditional surgical procedures, was issued in October of 2013 [27]. The statement was written by the ACOG’s Committee on Ethics and published in the November 2013 issue of *Obstetrics and Gynecology* [27], ACOG’s official publication. In it, ACOG acknowledges that “the importance of patient autonomy and increased access to information, especially information on the Internet, has prompted more requests for surgical interventions not traditionally recommended.” In drafting the statement, the committee aimed “to provide an ethical framework to guide physicians’ responses to patient requests for surgical treatment that is not traditionally recommended.” While written more for the eventualities of elective Cesarean section before onset of labor, and prophylactic removal of ovaries in a woman at very significant risk for breast or ovarian cancer, the committee notes that, “depending on the context, acceding to a request for a surgical option that is not traditionally recommended can be ethical,” and that “decisions about acceding to patient requests for surgical interventions...should be based on strong support for patients’ informed preferences and values.”

While the politics remain interesting, the handwriting is on the wall: patient autonomy (see Chapter 6) is paramount, and physicians can and will perform these procedures, provided that the patient is well informed,

not pressured, and the physician adequately trained for the specific procedure he or she plans to perform.

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CHAPTER 3

Anatomic considerations

Orawee Chinthakanan, Robert D. Moore, and John R. Miklos

International Urogynecology Associates, Atlanta, GA, and Beverly Hills, CA, USA

Introduction

Pelvic floor dysfunction is a common health issue in women [1], with an 11.1% lifetime risk of undergoing pelvic floor reconstructive surgery [2]. Researchers have predicted that surgery for stress urinary incontinence (SUI) and pelvic organ prolapse (POP) will have increased by 47.2% over the next four decades [1]. In addition, female genital cosmetic surgery has become more available in the general population [3]. Integrity of the pelvic floor is a basis for the physiology of this complex anatomical region, as it is involved in functions such as defecation, urination, and sexual activity. The prevention of POP and maintenance of continence also depend on the pelvic floor supportive system.

This chapter focuses on the functional anatomy of the pelvic floor and relations to female genital cosmetic surgery. The chapter is divided into three sections: general pelvic floor anatomy, external genital anatomy and inter-relationships, and internal anatomy/inter-relationships.

General pelvic floor anatomy

The bony pelvis

The bony pelvis is composed of sacrum, ileum, ischium, and pubis. The pelvis is divided into the major (false) and minor (true) pelvis. The major pelvis is a part of the abdominal cavity that is superior to the pelvic brim. The minor pelvis is an inferior and narrower continuation of the major pelvis (Figure 3.1). The anatomical landmark of major and minor pelvis consists of the pelvic

symphysis, coccyx, and sacrum at the back. A wider transverse inlet and narrower obstetrical conjugate predispose the female to subsequent pelvic floor disorders [4]. For pelvic reconstructive surgeons, various parts of the bony pelvis can be used clinically as surgical landmarks. The ischial spine is an anatomical landmark that can be used to identify the sacrospinous ligament. The sacrospinous ligament is attached from the ischial spine to the lateral margins of the sacrum and coccyx, which are located anterior to the sacrotuberous ligament. The sacrotuberous ligament extends from the ischial tuberosity to the coccyx. The greater and lesser sciatic foramina are above and below the sacrospinous ligament. The anterior superior iliac spine (ASIS) is a bony landmark that helps the surgeon's orientation for placing endoscopic ports. The inguinal ligament is attached from the ASIS to the pubic tubercle. The iliopectineal ligament (Cooper's ligament) is attached from the posterior aspect of the inguinal ligament anteriorly to the iliopectineal eminence posteriorly. Cooper's ligament is an important anatomical landmark for Burch colposuspension [5] (Figure 3.1). The arcus tendineus fascia pelvis (ATFP) or white line is an anatomical landmark for paravaginal defect repair (Figure 3.1). The ATFP is a thickening of the endopelvic fascia over the obturator internus muscle, which is attached from the pubic symphysis anteriorly to the ischial spine posteriorly on each side of the pelvis. The vagina and its surrounding connective tissue attach to this dense fibrous structure to form a slinglike structure that runs under the urethra and bladder neck in a position to support the urethra. The average distance of the ATFP is 9 cm and is correlated

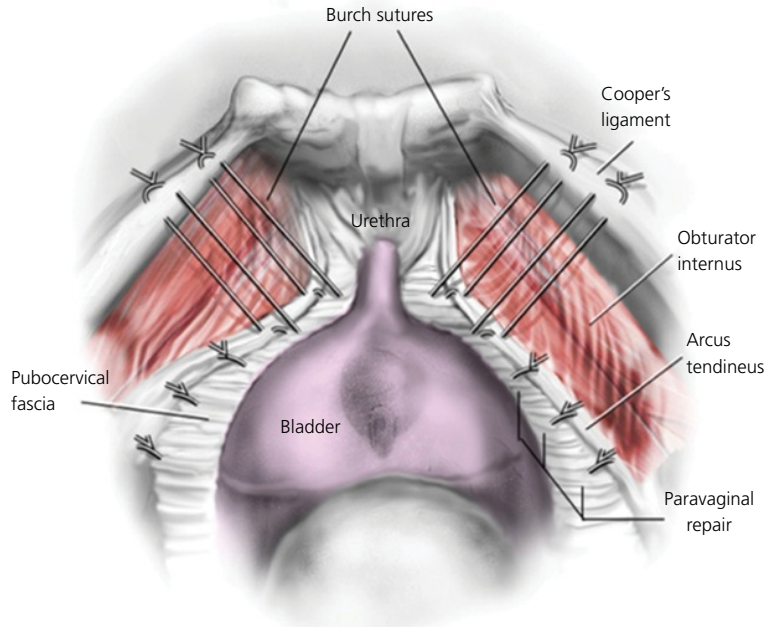


Figure 3.1 Cooper's ligament and the arcus tendineus fascia pelvis (ATFP). Source: Robert D. Moore and John R. Miklos. Reproduced with permission.

with the height [6]. The ATFP and Cooper's ligament can be palpated during dissection into the Retzius (paravesical) space. These ligaments play an important role in urethral support [7, 8]. Paravaginal defects, commonly seen in patients with anterior vaginal wall prolapse, are due to the detachment of pubocervical fascia from the ATFP, at or near its lateral attachment. The symphysis pubis is also an anatomical landmark for anti-incontinence procedures, that is, retropubic sling, Marshall-Marchetti-Krantz (MMK) procedure, and so forth. The sacral promontory is an important landmark for sacral colpopexy procedures.

Pelvic floor musculature

The skeletal muscles that provide pelvic floor support are the levator ani muscles, the coccygeus, the external anal sphincter, the striated urethral sphincter, and the deep and superficial perineal muscles.

Pelvic floor muscle (pelvic diaphragm)

The pelvic diaphragm, composed of the levator ani and coccygeus muscles, is responsible for supporting pelvic and abdominal visceral organs and maintaining the stability of intra-abdominal pressure. These muscles form

the muscular floor of the pelvis. The levator ani is composed of the pubovisceral and iliococcygeus [9] (Figure 3.2). From many magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) studies, levator ani abnormalities can be identified in women with stress urinary incontinence [10], POP [11], and even after vaginal delivery [12].

The pelvic diaphragm is formed by two muscle groups, the small coccygeus muscle posteriorly, and the much larger and more important levator ani musculature anteriorly. The coccygeus (ischiococcygeus) muscle is originated from the tip and the posterior border of the ischial spine and inserted at the coccyx. The coccygeus muscle is located at the superior aspect of the sacrospinous ligament to form the posterior portion of the pelvic diaphragm. The levator ani muscles are composed of two major components, the pubovisceral and the iliococcygeal [9]. The pubovisceral portion includes those muscles arising from the pubic bones: the pubococcygeus, puborectalis, and puboperineus. The arcus tendineus levator ani (ATLA) represents the upper margin of the aponeurosis of the ileococcygeus muscle. The ATLA is a thickened line of the fascia over the obturator internus muscle running in an arching line from the pubis to the ischial spine. The iliococcygeus muscle is

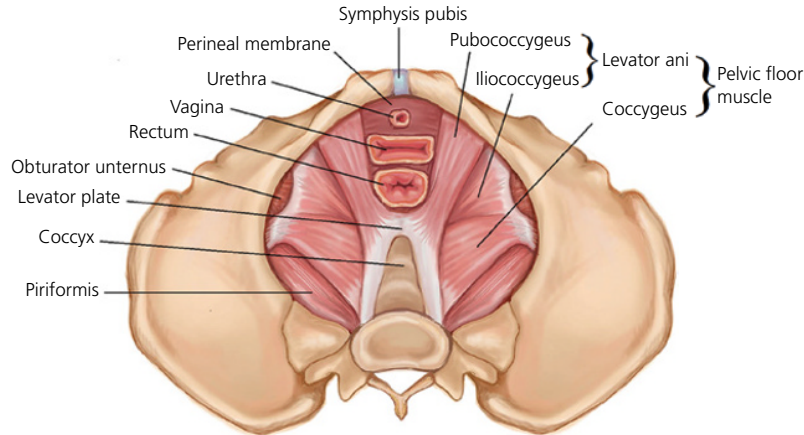


Figure 3.2 Superior view of the pelvic floor muscle. Source: Orawee Chinthakanan. Reproduced with permission.

a thin lateral portion of the levator ani, which originates from the posterior portion of the ATLA and ischial spine and inserts to the lateral margin of the coccyx and lower sacrum. The pubococcygeus muscle is the thick medial part of the levator ani, originating from the back of the body of the pubis and the anterior portion of the ATLA on each side. The pubococcygeus runs posteriorly almost horizontally to behind the rectum. The medial edge forms the margin of the urogenital (levator) hiatus, which allows passage of the urethra, vagina, and rectum. The pubococcygeus is then inserted in the midline onto the anococcygeal raphe, known as the levator plate, running from the area posterior to the rectum to the coccyx. The levator plate is a midline point of the levator ani fusion. The puborectalis muscle is the most medial U-shaped muscle around the rectum at its junction with the anus. It pulls the anorectal junction forward and contributes to anal continence. The levator ani muscles are innervated from the pudendal nerve on the perineal surface and direct branches of the sacral nerves on the pelvic surface. Barber *et al.* have demonstrated that the levator ani musculature is not innervated by the pudendal nerve but by the “levator ani nerve” originating from the sacral nerve roots (S3–0S5), travelling along the superior surface of the pelvic floor [13].

Functionally, the levator ani exhibits constant baseline tone and can be voluntarily contracted. The muscles contain both slow-twitch (type I) fibers maintaining constant tone and fast-twitch (type II) fibers providing reflex and voluntary contractions [14]. The density of

fast-twitch fibers increases in the periurethral and perianal areas [15]. At rest the levator ani maintains closure of the urogenital hiatus. The voluntary contraction of the puborectalis muscle occurs to counteract increased intra-abdominal pressure. A normal voiding mechanism is controlled by contraction of the pubococcygeal muscle as well. Contraction of the pubococcygeal muscle raises the bladder neck; the detrusor and urethral muscles relax, leading to lengthening of the urethra. Finally the internal urethral orifice will narrow and close, and voiding stops [16]. The levator ani provides pelvic floor support, voluntary control of micturition, and fecal continence. Levator ani defects are associated with POP [17, 18], stress urinary incontinence [19], and fecal incontinence [20].

Perineal membrane (urogenital diaphragm)

The “perineal membrane” (or “urogenital diaphragm” in older texts) is a triangular-shaped musculofascial structure covering the anterior pelvic outlet below the pelvic diaphragm. The change in name reflects understanding that it is a sheet of dense connective tissue rather than a two-layered structure with muscles in between. This structure runs between the inferior pubic rami bilaterally and the perineal body posteriorly and is pierced in the midline by the urogenital hiatus. The distal vagina is supported mainly by connection to the perineal membrane anteriorly and the perineal body posteriorly and has a sphincterlike effect to assist in holding them in place. There are two systems holding the urethra in place: [1] the perineal membrane and its

attachment to the pubis, and [2] the connective tissue attached between the anterior sulcus and the ATPF. The perineal membrane contributes to urinary continence by attaching to periurethral striated muscles and providing structural support to the distal urethra. The point at which the urethra enters the perineal membrane is the point that urine flow stops and has the highest intraurethral pressure when a woman voluntarily contracts her pelvic floor to stop her urine stream [21]. The posterior triangle below the perineal body does not have a supporting diaphragm or membrane. The ischiocavernosus, the bulbocavernosus, and the superficial transverse perineal muscles are located superficial to the perineal membrane and are considered less supportive.

Perineum

The borders of the perineum are the ischiopubic rami, ischial tuberosities, sacrotuberous ligaments, and coccyx. It is divided into the urogenital triangle anteriorly and the anal triangle posteriorly by using an imaginary line between ischial tuberosities bilaterally as a landmark. The perineal membrane divides the urogenital triangle into a superficial and deep perineal space. The superficial perineal space is composed of the superficial perineal muscles (ischiocavernosus, bulbocavernosus, and superficial transverse perineal muscles), the erectile tissue of the clitoris, the vestibular bulbs, and Bartholin's glands (Figure 3.3). The deep perineal space is a thin space that is located between the perineal membrane

and the levator ani muscles. It contains the external urethral sphincter, the sphincter urethrovaginalis, compressor urethrae, and deep transverse perineal muscles (Figure 3.3). The perineal body is a pyramidal fibromuscular elastic structure situated in the midline between the rectum and the vagina with the rectovaginal septum ("fascia of Denonvilliers") located superiorly. The perineal body, containing smooth muscle, elastic fibers, and nerve endings, is a merging point of several structures: the superficial and deep transverse perineus muscles, the bulbocavernosus muscle, the external anal sphincter, levator ani (puborectalis and pubococcygeus muscles), perineal membrane, and the posterior vaginal muscularis. The perineal body plays an important role as distal support of the posterior compartment. DeLancey [22] and Hsu *et al.* [23] have demonstrated the concepts of the posterior compartment support through cadaveric dissection [22] and imaging [23]. Posterior compartment support is contributed by the uterosacral ligaments for the upper portion, the ATPF for the middle portion, and the perineal body for the distal portion. These will be discussed later in the chapter. The perineal body is commonly damaged during labor and delivery. When the perineal body detachment is present, rectocele or fecal or urinary incontinence may occur. In order to correct the defect, the perineal body must be reattached to the posterior vaginal wall and rectovaginal septum to regain the functional capacity of the urinary and fecal continence mechanism [24].

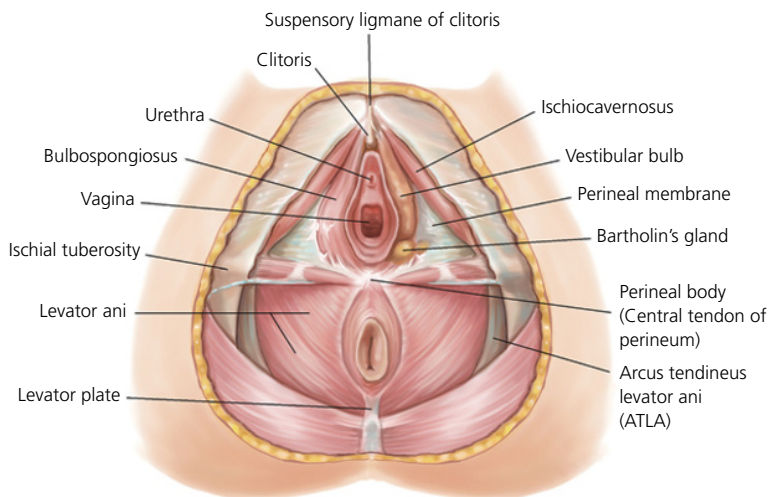


Figure 3.3 Perineal membrane and perineum. Source: Orawee Chinthakanan. Reproduced with permission.

Vascular supply

The internal pudendal artery, a branch of the anterior trunk of the internal iliac artery, is the major arterial supply to the perineal body. The internal pudendal artery travels along with the pudendal nerve through Alcock's canal and is then divided into the perineal, the dorsal artery of the clitoris, and inferior rectal arteries. The perineum is mainly supplied by the transverse branch of the perineal artery and the inferior rectal artery. The middle rectal artery, a branch of the internal iliac artery, provides blood supply to the middle third of the rectum and the superior portion of the perineal body. The superior rectal artery, a branch of the inferior mesenteric artery, also provides minor branches to supply the perineal body.

Somatic innervation

The pudendal nerve innervates the pelvic floor musculature (Figure 3.4). The pudendal nerve originates from the sacral nerve root 2-4 (S2-4), descends between the coccygeus and piriformis muscle, and finally travels under the sacrospinous ligament medial to the ischial spine. The nerve exits the pelvis through the greater sciatic foramen and enters the perineum through the lesser sciatic foramen. It then travels along the lateral wall of the ischioanal fossa within Alcock's canal (pudendal canal) on the medial aspect of the obturator

internus muscle before dividing into terminal branches supplying the skin and muscles of the perineum. The inferior rectal nerve branches off as the pudendal nerve wraps around the ischial spine and subsequently supplies the external anal sphincter, which plays an important role in fecal continence and provides sensory innervation to the distal anal canal below the pectinate line. The pudendal nerve is divided into the dorsal nerve of clitoris and the perineal nerve at the level of the superior fascia of the pelvic diaphragm and endopelvic fascia. The perineal nerve then supplies the labia and the perineal body. The external urethral sphincter is supplied by other branches of the perineal nerve and helps maintain urinary continence. The internal anal sphincter is supplied by the uterovaginal portion of the inferior hypogastric plexus, the pelvic splanchnic nerve, and the posterior femoral cutaneous nerve.

External genital anatomy

The female external genitalia (the vulva), from anterior to posterior, is formed by the mons pubis, labia majora, labia minora, vulvar vestibule, external urethral meatus, hymen, ostia of the accessory glands (Bartholin's, Skene's, and vesitubular glands), and the perineum (Figure 3.5). These structures are inferior to the perineal

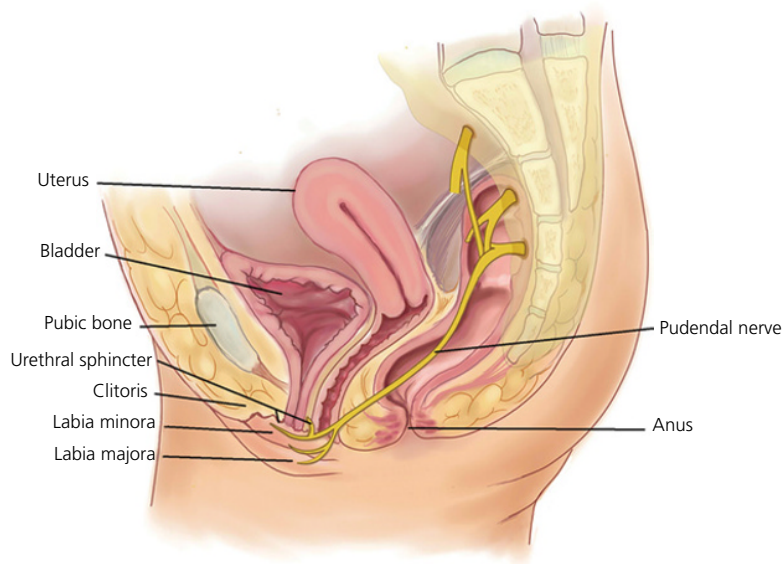


Figure 3.4 The pudendal nerve innervation. Source: Orawee Chinthakanan. Reproduced with permission.

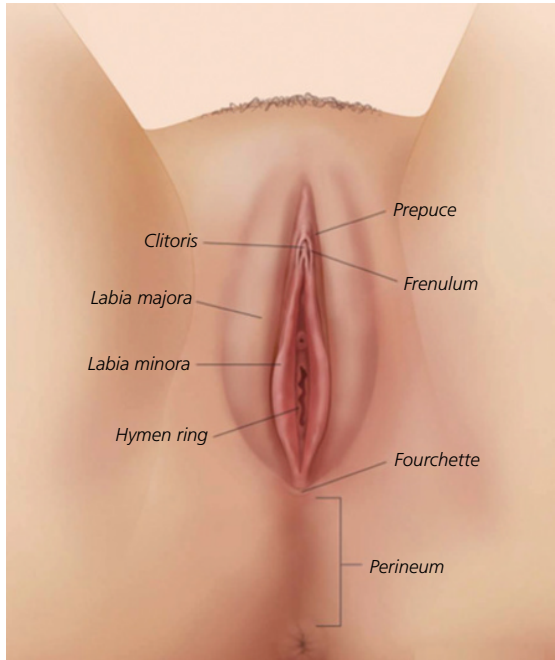


Figure 3.5 Normal external genitalia. Source: Robert D. Moore and John R. Miklos. Reproduced with permission.

membrane. The mons pubis is a fat pad, containing skin appendages with sebaceous and sweat glands, and is located over the pubic bone with a hair-bearing squamous epithelium. A survey conducted in the United State has indicated that 80% of women practice pubic hair grooming regardless of their pubic hair styles [25]. Pubic hair removal is widely performed among diverse ethnic/racial groups. Minor complications of pubic hair removal are folliculitis and abrasion, more likely to occur in obese women [26]. In 82% of women their external genitalia is of a darker complexion than surrounding skin [27].

Labia majora

The labia majora are two prominent cutaneous folds running from the mons pubis, merging at the perineum. They are differentiated from the labioscrotal fold in embryonic development and correspond to the scrotum in men. The normal length of labia majora, measured from the crura of clitoris to the posterior fourchette, is 9.3 cm (range 7–12 cm) [27]. They are separated from the labia minora by a discrete line, the “interlabial fold.”

Squamous epithelium covers a fascial layer overlying a fatty layer and a fingerlike fat pad covered by a thin

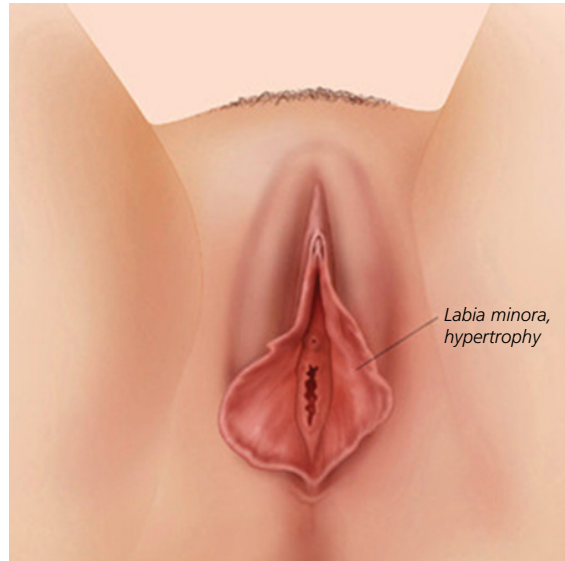


Figure 3.6 Labia minora. Source: Robert D. Moore and John R. Miklos. Reproduced with permission.

fascial aponeurosis, Colle’s fascia. Not infrequently this layer tears, partially extruding its contents with resultant loss of tension and possible sequelae resulting in laxity and skin folds.

With aging, skin layer relaxation, stretching secondary to pregnancy and involution, weight gain (and loss), and repeated chafing, labial skin can become redundant and protrude [see Figure 8.29(a) and (b), Chapter 8].

Labia minora

The “upper,” superior, or cranial portions of the labia minora (see Figure 3.6) begin as one or several folds descending caudally from the prepuce (“hood”) and frenulum, eventually coalescing into one relatively thin to broadened fold curtaining the edge of the vulvar vestibule and introitus and ending just above the perineum or continuing as the fourchette, or posterior commissure, in a variable manner onto the perineum, frequently meeting and bonding with the contralateral labum [see Chapter 8, Figures 8.19, 8.21, 8.22, 8.23(a)[1]]. Standing, many women’s labia minora are tucked away, not visible from above. Protrusion beyond the labia majora with the thighs abducted is often a cause of significant dissatisfaction for many women [28, 29], often producing a vulvar appearance “which resembles a scrotum” [30] (see Chapter 8, Figure 8.23(a)[2]).