

# IT'S TIME TO TALK

ADELAIDE PELVIC RECONSTRUCTIVE SURGEON **DR OSEKA ONUMA** EXPLAINS HOW GENITAL SURGERY HELPS EASE DISCOMFORT AND RESTORE SELF-ESTEEM IN HIS PATIENTS. CAITLIN BISHOP REPORTS.

Genital surgery – whether it's sought for rejuvenation purposes or to counter discomfort – can go a long way in boosting a woman's self-esteem and enhancing her inner confidence.

Sexual health holds a massive influence over mental health and psychological wellbeing. Even though it is not so openly discussed in mainstream media or even between friends, genital surgery can help alleviate pain and improve quality of life for many women.

Adelaide pelvic reconstructive surgeon Dr Oseka Onuma believes vaginal rejuvenation has been misrepresented in mainstream media and, because of this, women receive little support in making a decision that is necessary to ease discomfort or improve self-confidence.

'The number of women patronised by mainstream media and even by some members of the medical community when seeking help is disappointing,' Dr Onuma explains. 'The majority of my patients seeking vaginal rejuvenation are not motivated by the aesthetic, but a growing dislike of pain during intercourse or discomfort when participating in everyday activities.'

Unfortunately, when it comes to genital and sexual health, the differences between women and any potential concerns can be shrouded in a blanket of taboo. For this reason, some women aren't aware of the options available and there is often a limited understanding of what is "normal" and what is not.

'Some women live with the discomfort of oversized labia for many years and, often, when they come to see me for a labiaplasty, they have only recently become aware they can have something done to improve the situation,' Dr Onuma

explains. 'The only comment that can be made with any certainty about the size and shape of the labia is that they are all very different.'

As well as affecting vaginal aesthetics, oversized, enlarged or asymmetrical labia minora can cause discomfort during sex and activities such as bike riding. It can also cause irritation and discomfort when wearing certain clothes, for example swimwear, tights or jeans.

'Each patient will have different motivations, concerns and expectations in seeking genital surgery,' Dr Onuma explains. 'It is important to listen to the concerns of the individual patient, assess them with appropriate examinations and offer a series of potential solutions.'

The growing public awareness around genital surgery has caused an increased demand for vaginal rejuvenation surgeries. Dr Onuma hopes that alongside this growing acceptance there will be an adjustment in how genital surgery is perceived. 'Genital surgery can increase a woman's confidence in herself and her relationships,' he says. 'Women may not find it easy to talk to stranger, doctors or friends about a loose vagina, labial discomfort or lack of vaginal sensation but these issues need to be raised and explored in order to provide the options for improving quality of life.' **csbm**

## TREATING URINARY INCONTINENCE

Female stress urinary incontinence is usually caused by an improperly functioning urethra. The surrounding muscles and pelvic tissue are generally weakened, meaning the urethra doesn't maintain a tight seal during exercise or other movements such as coughing or laughing, and urine invariably escapes.

The tensionless vaginal tape, or TVT sling, is a minimally invasive procedure during which a Prolene tape sling is inserted to correct stress urinary incontinence.

The mesh is inserted through the vagina and positioned underneath the urethra, creating a supportive sling. Notably, this is held in place by surrounding tissues rather than sutured into position. During movement or exercise, the mesh supports the urethra, allowing it to maintain its seal and prevent urine loss.

'Today, women are less willing to accept changes in genital anatomy resulting from pregnancy childbirth and ageing,' Dr Onuma explains. 'With various surgical and non-surgical techniques, there is a range of options available to address, and hopefully resolve, these problems. Taking action and seeking intervention can help restore self-image, enhance self-esteem and improve quality of life.'

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To empower women with knowledge, choice and alternatives



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