

# Sexual healing

THIS VERY PERSONAL PROCEDURE CAN EMPOWER WOMEN TO LEAD HAPPIER AND MORE LIBERATED LIVES.

Sexual health has a huge influence on mental health and psychological wellbeing. The function and form of the different parts of the vagina are closely linked to the female psyche and the perception of self in terms of attractiveness and confidence.

Oversized, elongated or asymmetrical labia minora can lead to self-consciousness and even embarrassment. It can cause discomfort during sex and hinder certain activities such as bike riding and horse riding, and often makes wearing certain clothes such as swimwear, jeans or tights uncomfortable.

Vaginal rejuvenation – both surgical and non-surgical procedures – can help alleviate pain, improve form and function, and enhance quality of life for many women.

‘Questions surrounding the appearance and function of the vagina and urinary system can plague women of all ages, yet talking openly about these concerns can be challenging for some women,’ says Adelaide gynaecologist and pelvic reconstruction surgeon Dr Oseka Onuma. ‘A blanket of taboo means there is a lack of open and honest public dialogue that makes it difficult for some women to seek successful treatment – or even know there are treatment options available.’

Even now, with the relatively recent arrival of laser vaginal rejuvenation and all its media attention, more coverage is given to the aesthetic component of the

procedure rather than the improvement to vaginal function and overall quality of life.

‘The majority of my patients seeking vaginal rejuvenation are not motivated by the aesthetic but, rather, a growing dislike of pain during intercourse or discomfort when participating in everyday activities,’ says Dr Onuma. ‘I believe in empowering women through knowledge, choice and access to the best treatments.’

‘As women become more aware that it is possible to correct potentially ‘embarrassing’ problems, female genital procedures are increasing in popularity. These days women are less willing to accept changes in genital anatomy resulting from pregnancy, childbirth and ageing. They are less likely to have the attitude ‘it’s just part of being a woman’, he says.

Every organ within the female pelvic floor is subject to stress – from gravity or from the delivery of a baby. Muscle, connective tissue and epithelium can break, tear, stretch and lose their elasticity, resulting in functional impairments. The organs within the female pelvic floor that can be subject to prolapse include the urethra, bladder, uterus, vaginal walls, perineum and labia minora. All can present as a lump or mass that was not previously visible or noted by the woman.

Common symptoms of vaginal wall prolapse or relaxation include a lump, a ‘dragging’ within the vagina or lower back, urinary incontinence, the need to empty the bladder frequently and/or with urgency, pain and/or reduced sensation during intercourse.

Another problem is female stress urinary incontinence, caused predominantly by an improperly functioning urethra. When a woman suffers from this condition, weakened muscle and pelvic tissue don’t adequately support the urethra. As a result, the urethra doesn’t maintain a tight seal during exercise or exertion such as coughing or laughing and urine may escape. ‘Beyond pelvic floor retraining and physiotherapy, there is now a range of minimal-access surgical options available that can address and hopefully resolve these problems,’ says Dr Onuma.





## Your options

Laser reduction labioplasty can sculpt the elongated or unequal labial minora as desired, as well as reconstruct conditions that are a result of the ageing process, childbirth trauma or injury. The structures of the vulva, which include the labia minora, labia majora, mons pubis, perineum, entrance to the vagina and hymen, can be surgically enhanced, both functionally and aesthetically.

Laser-assisted vaginal surgical procedures can enhance vaginal muscle tone, strength and control. According to Dr Onuma, the laser techniques deliver gentle precision procedures with controlled accuracy and result in rapid healing, minimal pain and relatively fast recovery and allow for improved sensation and resumption of daily activities in a relatively short period of time.

An office worker could return to work after two weeks; total healing of surface and connective tissues along with damaged muscle may take up to six weeks.

'Non-surgical laser vaginal treatment is not a surgical approach,' Dr Onuma explains. 'It is not the same as traditional or laser-assisted labioplasty and may not be the most suitable avenue of treatment for some patients.'

The best approach is to discuss your symptoms with a doctor who has a clear understanding of all the modalities of treatment available and is able to guide you towards the mode of treatment that might offer you the best outcome.'

According to Dr Onuma, while non-surgical laser vaginal treatment shows the most promise for improving or curing symptoms related to atrophic vaginitis, it is of little value in correcting pelvic organ prolapse. 'Also, whilst non-surgical laser vaginal treatment can improve very mild stress incontinence or reduce vaginal wall relaxation, it is unlikely to cure any significant stress urinary incontinence or improve sensation during intercourse where the vagina and the vaginal introitus are patulous because of detached or torn muscles and fascia,' he says.

'No woman should suffer embarrassment or feel inhibited in her relationship with her partner due to the appearance of her vagina or physical sexual dysfunction. The importance of reassuring my patient that she is not alone in her genital issues and that there are options for improving her quality of life cannot be over-emphasised,' he concludes. **CBM**

## The Australian Centre for Female Pelvic & Vaginal Rejuvenation



Empowering women through knowledge, choice and access to world class care



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