
An abnormal sized labia (lips of the vagina) can cause discomfort during hygiene, sport activities and sexual intercourse. Labiaplasty, often spelled labiaplasty, allows for the reduction of internal or external labia, which are often augmented and asymmetrical. Surgery of the external labia, which may be losing size or elasticity, can also be done.

What is labiaplasty?

The female external genitalia consist of the vaginal opening, urinary opening and a peak with many sensitive nervous endings called the clitoris. This whole area is covered on all sides with gentle folds of skin tissue. The inner lips (**labia minora**) come together in the area of clitoris. The female external genitalia are covered on all sides with larger skin folds with fat cushions, known as the outer lips (**labia majora**). The outer lips usually cover and protect the external genitalia. Sometimes the labia minora grows larger in size or length and thus protrudes between the labia majora, usually this overlap is not too big so it does not cause any discomfort either aesthetically or functionally. If the inner lips protrude too much, they can cause discomfort in an aesthetic way and also in everyday life. Sometimes it is difficult to fit an abnormally enlarged labia into tight underwear or a swimsuit, sometimes it can cause discomfort during sport activities – for example bicycle riding. It can also cause problems with intimate hygiene and this “defect” can also represent a psychological obstacle during intercourse. **Labiaplasty** is effective with good results. Sometimes a plastic surgeon can meet the request for a modification or reduction of the outer lips, although these procedures are rarely performed.

Preparation for labiaplasty

Labiaplasty patients must be adults. All potential labiaplasty patients should have a thorough consultative examination with a plastic surgeon. Here, the patient should not only receive an examination but also detailed instructions on how the labiaplasty will be performed and what the patient can expect. In most cases the patient will agree on her requirements for the size or shape of the operated area with the plastic surgeon. The date of the surgery should then be scheduled so that the patient will receive the labiaplasty shortly after menstruation has ended. The labiaplasty surgeon will also instruct the patient on proper intimate hygiene in the period following the surgery.

Labiaplasty surgery

The **labiaplasty** is almost always performed under general anaesthesia, on an operating table with the patient in a gynaecological position. The surgeon precisely measures the direction of the surgical incisions before the surgery so that the final scars will not be visible and so they won't cause discomfort to the patient. Great attention should be paid to the area of the clitoris so the gentle nerves that give special sensitivity to this area will not be damaged.

Labiaplasty of the inner labia will be done **by use of the trim- (edge resection-) technique**.

In addition to very gentle and careful work, it is necessary to stop any bleeding during labiaplasty. After the modification, a very tight but also gentle suturing of the surgical wound is necessary. To stitch the wound, various types of suturing material are used; sometimes absorbable, sometimes nonabsorbable (such sutures have to be removed after the wound is healed.) Which suturing material is used depends on the plastic surgeon and his/her experiences. **Labiaplasty** takes about one hour, depending on the extent of the surgery, and is not especially difficult on the patient. Soreness after the procedure is normally not a large problem; most patients only describe unpleasant, but not overly strong, burning in this area.

Post-operation Instructions

You may need up to 2 weeks off work to recover. It can take a couple of months for the skin to fully heal. During this time, you need to keep the area clean and free from infection, wear loose underwear and clothes to prevent rubbing, avoid sex for about 6 weeks, avoid physical activity for 6 to 12 weeks, use sanitary towels instead of tampons for a few weeks.

Side effects - It's normal after a labiaplasty to have soreness, bruising and swelling for up to 2 weeks. During this time, peeing and sitting may also be uncomfortable. You'll be given painkillers to help with this.

A labiaplasty can occasionally result in bleeding, infection, scarring of tissue, reduced sensitivity of the genitals.

Labiaplasty results

Labiaplasty almost always brings satisfactory results to the patient. Of course, much depends on the experiences of the labiaplasty surgeon so that he/she is able to avoid possible complications. It also depends very much on the cooperation and discipline of the patient to fulfil all the recommendations following the surgery. Some doctors – sexologists – don't like these surgeries too much as they are afraid of a possible reduction of sexual sensation in women who have undergone labiaplasty.

When *labiaplasty* has been performed here, the opposite has been seen. Women who have had the surgery mention mostly improved sensations during sexual intercourse, also by having the surgery, any psychological problems with their genitalia appearance are removed. This contributes to a more relaxed and improved sex life.