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COURSE TITLE: GROSS ANATOMY OF THE PELVIC AND PERINEUM

With the aid of diagram, discuss the gross anatomy of the female external genitalia

FEMALE EXTERNAL GENITALIA

The vulva, also known as the pudendum, is a term used to describe those external organs that may be visible in the perineal area. The vulva consists of the following organs: mons pubis, labia minora and majora, hymen, clitoris, vestibule, urethra, Skene glands, greater vestibular (Bartholin) glands, and vestibular bulbs.The boundaries include the mons pubis anteriorly, the rectum posteriorly, and the genitocrural folds (thigh folds) laterally. Other features of the vulva include the pudendal cleft, [sebaceous glands](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sebaceous_gland), the [urogenital triangle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urogenital_triangle) (anterior part of the [perineum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perineum)), and [pubic hair](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pubic_hair). The vulva includes the entrance to the [vagina](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vagina), which leads to the [uterus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uterus), and provides a double layer of protection for this by the folds of the outer and inner [labia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Labia). [Pelvic floor muscles](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pelvic_floor_muscles) support the structures of the vulva. Other muscles of the urogenital triangle also give support.



Mons pubis

The mons pubis is the rounded portion of the vulva where sexual hair development occurs at the time of puberty. This area may be described as directly anterosuperior to the pubic symphysis. The mons pubis is the soft mound of [fatty tissue](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adipose_tissue) at the front of the vulva, in the pubic region covering the [pubic bone](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pubis_%28bone%29). *Mons pubis* is Latin for "pubic mound" and is present in both [sexes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sex) to act as a cushion during [sexual intercourse](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sexual_intercourse), and is more pronounced in the female. The lower part of the mons pubis is divided by a fissure, the pudendal cleft, which separates the mons pubis into the labia majora. After puberty, the clitoral hood and the labia minora can protrude into the pudendal cleft in a variable degree. The mons and labia majora become covered in [pubic hair](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pubic_hair) at [puberty](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Puberty).

Labia

The outer pair of folds, divided by the pudendal cleft, are the labia majora and they contain and protect the other structures of the vulva. The labia majora are 2 large, longitudinal folds of adipose and fibrous tissue. They vary in size and distribution from female to female, and the size is dependent upon adipose content. They extend from the mons pubis anteriorly to the perineal body posteriorly. The labia majora have hair follicles.

 The labia minora, also known as nymphae, are 2 small cutaneous folds that are found between the labia majora and the introitus or vaginal vestibule. Anteriorly, the labia minora join to form the frenulum of the clitoris. They meet posteriorly at the [frenulum of the labia minora](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frenulum_of_labia_minora), a fold of restrictive tissue. The labia minora meet again at the front of the vulva to form the clitoral hood, also known as the prepuce.

 The grooves between the labia majora and labia minora are called the [interlabial sulci](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Labia%22%20%5Co%20%22Labia), or interlabial folds

Hymen

The hymen is a thin membrane found at the entrance to the vaginal orifice. Often, this membrane is perforated before the onset of menstruation, allowing flow of menses. The hymen varies greatly in shape.

Clitoris

The clitoris is an erectile structure found beneath the anterior joining of the labia minora. Its width in an adult female is approximately 1 cm, with an average length of 1.5–2.0 cm. The clitoris is made up of 2 crura, which attach to the periosteum of the ischiopubic rami. It is a very sensitive structure, analogous to the male penis. It is innervated by the dorsal nerve of the clitoris, a terminal branch of the pudendal nerve. The visible portion of the clitoris is the [clitoral glans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clitoral_glans). Typically, this is roughly the size and shape of a [pea](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pea), and can vary in size from about 6 mm to 25 mm. The size can also vary when it is erect.

 The clitoral glans contains as many nerve endings as the much larger [homologous](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homology_%28biology%29) [glans penis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glans_penis) in the male, which makes it highly sensitive. The only known function of the clitoris is to focus sexual feelings. The [clitoral hood](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clitoral_hood) is a protective fold of skin which varies in shape and size, and it may partially or completely cover the clitoris. The clitoris is the homologue of the [penis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Penis), and the clitoral hood is the female equivalent of the male [foreskin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foreskin), and may be partially or completely hidden within the pudendal cleft.

Vestibule and urethra

Between the clitoris and the vaginal introitus (opening) is a triangular area known as the vestibule, which extends to the posterior fourchette. The vestibule is where the urethral (urinary) meatus is found, approximately 1 cm anterior to the vaginal orifice, and it also gives rise to the opening of the Skene glands bilaterally. The urethra is composed of membranous connective tissue and links the urinary bladder to the vestibule externally. A female urethra ranges in length from 3.5 to 5.0 cm.

Skene and Bartholin glands

The Skene glands secrete lubrication at the opening of the urethra. The greater vestibular (Bartholin) glands are also responsible for secreting lubrication to the vagina, with openings just outside the hymen, bilaterally, at the posterior aspect of the vagina. Each gland is small, similar in shape to a kidney bean.

Vestibular bulbs

Finally, the vestibular bulbs are 2 masses of erectile tissue that lie deep to the bulbocavernosus muscles bilaterally.