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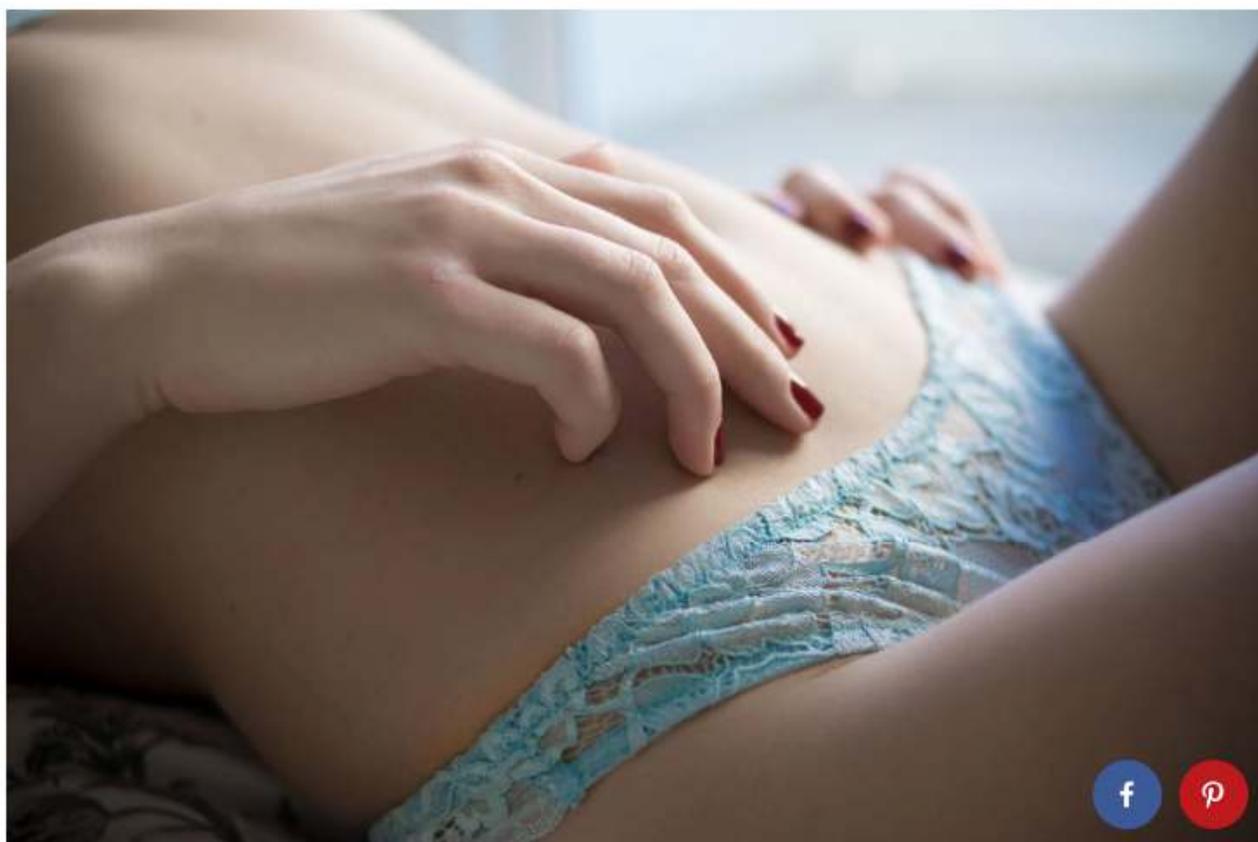
## So You Want to Get a Labiaplasty – Here's What You Need to Know



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You know what your mother always said: don't talk about politics, religion, or labiaplasty at the dinner table. OK, Mom never went that far, but to say there's a stigma against vaginal reconstruction — or plastic surgery in general — would be a total understatement.

As Dr. Melissa Doft, an NYC-based plastic surgeon, recently put it while visiting the POPSUGAR office, "One of the things about a labiaplasty is that it requires people to present the part of their body that they're most insecure about to a stranger. There's a lot of emotion around it."

If you're considering getting the procedure yourself, Dr. Doft gave some expert tips about what it entails, how much it hurts, and the really important sh\*t like how soon you can have sex post-op.

### Figure Out What You Want to Do

Let's get basic. There are two different types of vaginal reconstruction surgeries. You probably know that your labia is made of two lips: the outer one is called the majora, and the inner one is the minora. First, determine what kind of procedure you want. Sometimes the minora hangs too low or is a little long, and that can be adjusted with surgery. Other times, the majora can be too small, and you can

also build that up to be larger so that it covers the minora. Dr. Doft said the most common version she does is reducing the length of the minora.

### Know Why You Want to Do It

Of course, this is a deeply personal topic. Perhaps you want a labiaplasty for purely aesthetic reasons. "If your labia size is something that affects your life, it can be on your mind all the time," Dr. Doft said. "I've definitely had many patients who have never had a sexual relationship or never got to that level of touching in a relationship because they're so self-conscious about it."

Having an oversize minora can lead to certain health issues such as rashes. If this is the case, that means the procedure may be covered by health insurance.

You should note that if the inside of your vagina — *not* your labia — is torn, you shouldn't hit up a plastic surgeon to fix it. Dr. Doft said only ob-gyns should handle such cases.

### Understand the Logistics

A labiaplasty is not something that can be accomplished in one afternoon. First, you'll want to schedule a consultation to discuss the reasons behind your decision. If you are lucky enough to have a plan that covers a labiaplasty, it will take some back-and-forth between the doctor's office and your insurance company before you can schedule surgery. The amount of time you'll have to wait is pretty situational, but Dr. Doft estimated that it's usually around two to six weeks from your initial consultation to your final appointment.

If you're getting a labiaplasty for purely aesthetic reasons, you'll have to pay out-of-pocket. The upside is that you don't have to wait for insurance to approve anything, so you can do it sooner.

### Know What You're Getting Into

Onto perhaps the most important question: does it hurt? Luckily, the actual surgery itself isn't too traumatic, as patients can opt for two different types of anesthesia. Either you can be put to sleep or numbed with a local loss of feeling.

If your minora is too long, doctors use a "wedge technique" that is pretty much exactly what it sounds like. Your surgeon will cut out a wedge of skin from your labia and reattach that opening to cover it up and decrease its size. I winced at the idea of scissors that close to the Duchess (what I affectionately call my hoo-ha), but Dr. Doft shrugged it off. "Patients can tolerate it in the office under local [anesthetic]," she said. Plus, "that part is not as sensitive" as your actual vagina. The procedure ends with doctors sealing your incisions with dissolvable stitches — saving you from having to make another appointment to take anything out.

This process will take about 45 minutes to an hour and can be done in either a hospital setting or your plastic surgeon's office, depending on where you're most comfortable.

### What Happens Next?

Immediately following the surgery, you'll want to wear a maxi pad, as there will be a little discharge and perhaps some bleeding. You'll be sent home with some pain medicine just in case you feel sore, but some people don't end up needing it.

If you have an office job that requires sitting at a desk, it's best to take some days off following your labiaplasty. "The area can get pretty swollen, and if you're sitting on that — which we do most of the

time — it can be a bit uncomfortable," Dr. Doft warned. If you can't swing the PTO or just want extra protection, Dr. Doft advised investing in a doughnut pillow (\$26).

Since urine gets close to your labia, peeing can cause a bit of irritation the first few days after your labiaplasty. The best thing to do to combat that is filling a spray bottle with warm water to spritz over the area as you go to the bathroom. "It dilutes the urine and keeps it off the incisions," Dr. Doft said. Luckily, she added that the mucosal lining around your vagina is a part of your body that usually heals very quickly. "After a couple of days, most people are fine," she said.

You should plan to wear loose-fitting clothing and cotton underwear after your procedure. "You don't want to wear anything too tight, because it's going to rub against it and be irritating," the doctor said. And you officially have a damn good excuse for not working out post-op. "Everyone is different, but I would say no hardcore exercise for six weeks," Dr. Doft suggested. She added that light exercise such as walking can be done the day after your labiaplasty. Similarly, you should abstain from sex for the same amount of time as working out — sorry!