

What is a Labiaplasty?

A labiaplasty is surgical treatment of the labia minora. Common reasons include:

- Discomfort with the labia rubbing on underwear
- Not satisfied with the appearance (too long, sticking out of vulva, wrinkled)
- Interference with sports (cycling, running, swimming)

In addition to addressing the patient's concern, the surgical goal is to have *minimal labia minora protruding from the vulva while the patient is standing*.

What Is the Labia Minora?

The labia minora is a natural inner fold just lining the vaginal opening. This serves as a barrier to protect the vagina from dryness, irritation, and infection. It also has a role in sexual activity as it provides sensation and is connected to the clitoral hood. From childhood to puberty they become longer and thicker. This may become loose and stretch from childbirth. With age or the loss of hormone (menopause, medication), the labia minora lose elastic tissue, causing it to shrink in thickness but stay loose. It can also become dry and less sensitive to sexual stimulation.

The shape and colour of the labia minora differs from person to person. The outer edge may be darker than the inner part. The edge may be smooth or wavy. One side may be longer than the other. Some labia are larger than would be expected.

Who Can Have a Labiaplasty?

Labiaplasty is meant to treat issues in shape, appearance, or asymmetry. A person in good health can have a labiaplasty, if:

- Non-cigarette smoker
- Good genital health (example – healthy gynecologic examination, clean, no infections, sores, no cancer)
- There are reasonable expectations (example – labia may change over time)

Treatment Options for the Labia Minora

There are many ways that have been described to treat the labia minora. These include laser tightening without cutting, “trimming” the edge, wedge excision. The choice of treatment will depend on your discussion with Dr. Lee.

Note: This treats the outer labia minora only. Laser treatment may be added internally to address vaginal wall health.

	PROS	CONS
WEDGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keeps natural edge Preserves the colour of the edges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notching if the wound edge falls apart Should not use with thin labia
EDGE “TRIM”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Used for many decades Will not fall apart or create a notch at the edge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scar is on the edge Loss of natural edge and pigment Does not shorten a heavy clitoral hood Difficult to correct if too much is trimmed
CLITORAL HOOD REDUCTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduces extra skin over clitoris which improves appearance and sensitivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hypersensitivity of exposed clitoris Urine stream may change direction if pulled to tightly
LASER ASSISTED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simple No surgical scars Minimal time for the treatment Minimal recovery time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Needs at least 2-3 sessions for effect Will not address severe laxity

What to Expect From Surgery

The surgery lasts around 1.5 hours and you will go home the same day. This may be done as a minor procedure under local anesthesia, or asleep under general anesthesia.

After surgery, the labia will be slightly swollen. You will feel numb while the freezing is in place for 3-4 hours. You will have dissolving sutures in the labia as well as a pad with ointment. When the freezing subsides, there is a stinging feeling. Ice packs and a rinse bottle will be provided for comfort and cleansing.

Recovery

Most people will take 1-2 weeks off work. During this time minimal pain is normal. You may use ice packs for the first 3 days as needed. You will be given a bottle to rinse the vaginal area after going to the washroom. You will receive pain medication and antibiotics to take for 5 days. Your first appointment after surgery will be in 2 weeks.

Swelling can last from 2-4 months and usually goes down over this time. You will need to stop sexual activity or biking for 6 weeks. You will have visits in between with your surgeon to discuss activity progression as you recover.

Schedule your personal consultation with Dr. Lee to talk about labiaplasty.