

## Labiaplasty

### What does labiaplasty mean?

Labiaplasty refers to any procedure to modify the labia. The labia are the folds of skin or 'lips' at the entrance to the vagina.

The whole external genital region of a woman may be referred to as the vulval region. The labia majora (major) are the fuller folds on the outermost aspect of a woman's vulval region. These may be covered by pubic hair. The labia minora (minor) are the thinner, hairless innermost folds. These folds pass upwards towards the front of the vulval region and join to form the 'clitoral hood' surrounding the clitoris. The area above this is known as the mons pubis ('pubic mound'). This is the triangular area of skin and fat overlying the pubic bone that is covered by pubic hair. Dr Boorer will use drawings to help you understand these different terms.

In practice labiaplasty usually refers to reduction or reshaping of the labia minora. Many women also request changes to their labia majora, clitoral hood and/or mons pubis.

### Why do women request labiaplasty?

Just as there is variation in breast shape between women, there is also variation in the appearance of the vulval region from one woman to the next. Asymmetry of the vulval region is also very common. Further complicating this picture, a woman's vulval region can also change after child birth or with normal ageing.

The most common reason for women to seek labiaplasty is to reduce the length of the labia minora. When the labia minora are excessively long they can protrude past the labia majora, leading to pain or discomfort during sexual intercourse, during physical activities such as cycling, or even when wearing tight fitting clothing such as jeans.

Some women are also self-conscious about the appearance of their vulval region. They may be concerned about the shape, length or symmetry of the labia minora; about fullness in the labia majora or the mons pubis; about an excessively large clitoral hood or about scars from previous surgery or trauma.

### How is labiaplasty performed?

The procedure to reduce or reshape the labia minora may vary from woman to woman. It usually involves removing a wedge of skin from the centre or most protruding part of the labia. The open edges of the labia are then closed with dissolving stitches.

Reducing fullness in either the labia majora or mons pubis can usually be achieved with liposuction. Reduction of the clitoral hood is performed by removing excess skin via an incision in the groove between the labia minora and majora.

Dr Boorer usually performs these procedures in hospital under a light general anaesthetic. The procedure will take between 60 and 90 minutes. Most women are well enough to return home the same day.

The scars are designed to be as inconspicuous as possible. The vulval area tends to heal very well and most scars are barely perceptible. However scars do vary from woman to woman and they will always be present and visible on close inspection.

## The recovery period

Dr Boorer will see you regularly after your surgery and is happy to be contacted between visits if you have any concerns. Each person differs slightly in their recovery. You will be given advice specific to your circumstances. Below is a general guide:

### **Pain and discomfort:**

Usually lasts between 5 and 10 days.

### **Bleeding/ swelling:**

Some light bleeding may be experienced for a few days. Most of the swelling settles within the first two weeks however this may be longer for more extensive procedures.

### **Time off work:**

Dr Boorer recommends you take one week off work for a desk job, and up to three weeks for more strenuous physical work.

### **Driving:**

In order to be able to drive you must be comfortable. You will be required to have ceased all strong pain killers and you should be moving freely. Most people are able to drive within one week of the procedure.

### **Sports:**

Dr Boorer recommends gentle walking only in the first week following the procedure. You may progress to strenuous walking after 3-4 weeks, and resume all physical activities including sexual intercourse after six weeks.

### **Follow-up:**

There are three scheduled follow-up appointments; at one week, one month and three months after your procedure.

### **Final result:**

The final result of surgery should be evident 3-6 months after the procedure. Your scars will continue to improve for at least the next 12 months.

## Is there a risk of unexpected outcomes?

The large majority of patients who have labiaplasty performed by an experienced and well trained surgeon do not run into any unexpected outcomes. However, there is a risk of complications with all procedures.

Dr Boorer always takes the utmost care, and will use the most up to date techniques and preventative measures to minimise complications associated with your procedure. Dr Boorer will explain in detail the complications associated with labiaplasty surgery during your initial consultation/s.

Following labiaplasty most women experience some pain, bruising, swelling and minor bleeding. Uncommon complications include infection, anaesthetic complications, excessive scarring, delayed wound healing, asymmetry and under (or over) correction.