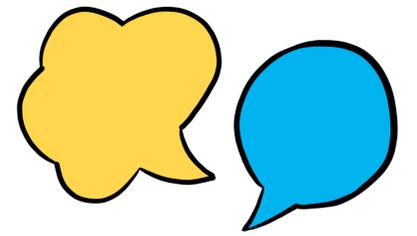


your vagina



SMART THINGS TO KNOW

*with Saleema Noon
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Your vagina may not be what you think it is. What many people think is their vagina is actually their vulva, the outside skin on the genitals. "Vagina" is not a name for the collective genitals, rather it's a muscular tube that runs from the vulva to the cervix (entrance to the uterus).

You can't lose anything up there. You don't have to worry about condoms and tampons escaping your vagina and wandering around your body! The cervix is very narrow so it blocks anything from getting through.

Sex keeps your vagina healthy. That's right, sexual activity keeps the juices and blood flowing, kind of like a workout for the vagina. This includes masturbation, by the way.

The vagina is like a fine bottle of wine. Normal pH of a vagina is 4.5, which is same as wine. Good bacteria keeps the pH low and the vagina protected. If the pH gets too high, balance gets thrown off and could lead to a yeast infection. Yeast infections can be cured easily with medication, but can be passed to partners during sexual contact. So, wait until it's completely gone and treatment is finished. Which brings me to #6...

Yeast loves sugar so don't put it in your vagina! Whipped cream, honey and chocolate syrup might sound good, but can lead to a yeast infection. Just sayin'.

Your vagina is like a self-cleaning oven. It constantly makes moisture just like your eyes do to keep itself clean. So, no need for a steam or a "vagacial" like Gwyneth Paltrow recommends, just wash the vulva once a day with warm water.

The clitoris is bigger than you think and shaped like a wishbone rather than button. I know that the clitoris is not part of the vagina, but I just couldn't pass up the chance to give this amazing piece of genitalia a mention. The clitoris is considered by many to be the key to sexual pleasure, and it's no wonder. The tip of the clitoris alone has a whopping 8000 nerve endings— more than double the number of nerve endings in the penis — making it the most sensitive part of the body. And if you aren't already impressed enough, research has shown that the clitoris can increase in size by up to 300 percent during sexual arousal.

The vagina doesn't fart! All people with vaginas have experienced it at one point or another: that embarrassing yet uncontrollable emission of air from the vagina, commonly known as "queefing". Kids actually ask me about this all the time. Yes, queefing sounds a lot like farting, but it's not. Those little puffs of air that emerge are simply that — trapped air that is being released from the vaginal canal. They are not "farts" in the traditional sense because they're not waste gases, nor do they emit an unpleasant odour.

It's not all about the G-spot!...at least not in the sense that there is a button in your vagina that, when pressed, brings on orgasm. It's a bit more complex than that. For years, researchers have suggested that there's an area about an inch or two up on the inside front wall of the vagina (the side closest to your belly button) that's associated with intense pleasure (that's why men's magazines have all kinds of ideas as to how to stimulate it). But the G-spot may not actually be a real organ. It doesn't show up in imaging research, and not all people with vaginas report being able to find one on themselves.

When aroused, the vagina can expand to around twice its normal size. Unaroused, the average vagina is about three to four inches deep. But during sex it can expand to about twice as big. That's partially because of a process called "vaginal tenting", which is what happens when you get aroused. There's more muscular tension in the body, which draws the uterus upward, creating more space in the vagina lengthwise.

Not all people assigned female at birth are born with hymens. And for those who do have hymens, they range in thickness and amount of coverage. Not only that, but most hymens shrink to barely noticeable size by age 25. What this means is that you can't use a "hymen check" to tell if someone is a virgin or not. We also know that people with vaginas may not bleed or experience pain the first time they have sex. Also, who cares! Obsessing about virginity is so 90s. And despite what the patriarchy tells us...

Your vagina won't be noticeably different after you have babies. The vagina is only organ that can stretch and then snap back into shape. There is actually no statistical difference in average recorded vaginal size between people who've had babies and people who haven't. And this isn't new news, we've known this from research for a long time. I wonder who does this research, anyway?!