

Vaginoplasty: An aesthetic approach to feel better

DR CHRISTOPHER CHONG

Medicine has moved into the realm of aesthetics (study of sensory or sensori-emotional values, sometimes called judgments of sentiment or taste) in the recent years. Different people have different ideas about how they look and how they feel.

Before touching on Vaginoplasty (surgical operation to graft tissue on to the vagina), I must mention that I am seeing more patients requesting Labioplasty (reduction of the labia).

Some patients, especially those below 40 years of age, are very upset by their enlarged labia (fleshy folds at the edge of the vulva, a woman's external sexual organs, at the opening leading to the vagina).

Some complain that penetration was more difficult and they feel the pain when their partner search for the point of entry. Others feel depressed when their partners

look at their vulva and there were complaints that the partners have been turned off by the sight.

Labioplasty is a simple surgery to cut away excess labia skin using a straight cut or a zig-zag interlocking cut. Stitching is done using very fine sutures and these are removed in about 1 week.

Labioplasty can be done as a day procedure with excellent results. The pelvic floor muscles in females control the bladder, womb and bowel. These 3 organ systems are lined one after another in the above order. When one organ system is damaged, it is likely that the neighbouring organs are involved as well.

The 3 main culprits for the pelvic floor muscles damaged are pregnancy/birth, menopause and obesity.

Some people are born with weak collagen muscle tissues and can have a lax vagina when young and even without birth. Certainly the main damage is from

pregnancy and childbirth. The baby's head going through the vagina can cause over-stretching and tearing of the pelvic floor muscles.

This is even worse as patients often do not do pelvic floor (Kegel's) exercise when pregnant and after delivery of the baby. Many do not know that this exercise can reduce or prevent pelvic floor damage.

If a doctor were to put the index finger into the vagina and the thumb into the anus, pinching them together will often give the findings of a hollow between the thumb and finger. This is due to damage of the pelvic floor muscles and damage of the tissue in that region called the perineal body.

Not uncommonly it is due to poorly healed or poorly cut (episiotomy) from childbirth. This gives the lax or open vulva/vagina feeling to the patient and her partner.

This usual complaints are

"looseness", "no strength", "no sensation" and "no fun". More patients are seeing me for Vaginoplasty these days.

In simple term — Vaginoplasty is the surgery to "tighten the vagina". Some do this for themselves; many do it for their partners.

Certainly if this situation reaches the "no fun" stage in intercourse, relationship can be affected. These patients often have a prolapse of the pelvic organ as well.

The greatest sex organ of the human is between the ears — the brain. The brain needs signals and feedback to function even better. Stimulation of the clitoris and vulva provide positive pleasurable feedback.

However for satisfactory vulval/vaginal stimulation, it often requires good fit at intercourse. This is the most common complaint from my patients — the problem with a "good fit".

It is important to understand the

psychological and emotional aspects of the couple. This will certainly help in managing expectations and improving successful outcome. In Vaginoplasty, I repair the perineal body and join the pelvic floor muscles back with sutures.

The vaginal skin will be fashioned in accordance with the amount of tightness of the pelvic floor muscles. This surgery can be done as a day procedure, with minimal pain and complications, and with good success rates under skilled hands.

I generally do not cut away vaginal skin unless it is excessive, otherwise the complication will be that of painful intercourse. Any prolapse problem must be corrected at the same time.

This is an attempt in achieving "a tight fit" to improve stimulation of the vulval and vaginal tissues.

Vaginoplasty can be done with or without the use of laser and the principles of surgery are the same.

Complications of bleeding and infection are uncommon. Some people scar badly and coupled with over-tightening or cutting away of too much vagina skin, can result in the nightmare of painful intercourse instead of more pleasurable sex.

Success of Vaginoplasty depends on to whom it concerns — the surgeon, the patient or the partner. The real success is when all 3 are happy.

Majority of my patients seeking this surgery are pre-menopausal and a good number are in their 30s. I am heartened that my patients have reported improved sexual satisfaction and relationship after Vaginoplasty.

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The writer is a Consultant Obstetrician, Gynaecologist and Urologist at Chris Chong Women and Urologist Clinic at Gleneagles Medical Centre in Singapore. [E-mail: drchrischong@gmail.com]

Breastfeeding safer for some HIV-infected mothers

REUTERS, Los Angeles



infectious diseases in babies fed formula compared to those exclusively breast-fed.

Breast milk protects babies

In industrialised countries, that rate has been cut to less than 2 percent by drug treatment, birth by Caesarean section and other methods.

Coovadia's 4-year study out of Durban, South Africa, found that 4 percent of babies who were exclusively breast-fed contracted HIV.

"By all means, if you have the resources to prepare hygienic milk — clean water, access to electricity and so on — that's for formula. If you don't have that, then the need is for exclusive breastfeeding," Coovadia said.

The "very surprising" findings show that in some settings the risk of dying from other infectious disease offsets the risk from HIV, said co-author Dr Grace Aldrovandi, an associate professor at Children's Hospital Los Angeles.

A trial of 958 women in Zambia found that babies who become infected with AIDS also did better and were less likely to die when they continued to breast-feed.

The WHO recommended in October that HIV-infected mothers exclusively breast-feed for the first six months unless substitute milk is acceptable, feasible, affordable, sustainable and safe for them and their infants.



REUTERS, Washington

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and high ceilings, had better ventilation than modern rooms that relied on natural ventilation.

And they were also superior to the mechanically ventilated rooms, they reported in their study.

Tuberculosis is spread by bacteria that can float in the air and the researchers calculated what their findings might mean for the spread of TB.

They estimated that in mechanically ventilated rooms, 39 percent of susceptible people would become infected after 24 hours of exposure to an untreated TB patient. This compared to a 33 percent infection rate in modern rooms with windows open and 11 percent in a pre-1950-style room.

"We found that opening windows and doors maximises natural ventilation so that the risk of airborne contagion is much lower than with costly, maintenance-requiring mechanical ventilation systems," wrote Rod Escombe of Imperial College London and colleagues in their report.

"Old-fashioned clinical areas with high ceilings and large windows provide greatest protection. Natural ventilation costs little and is maintenance-free," they added.

For their report, Escombe and colleagues tested the air in eight hospitals in Lima, Peru.

"Wards built more than 50 years ago, with large windows

INTERVIEW

Quality nursing staffs are key to ensure health care

STAR HEALTH REPORT



Dr M A Quasem, Founder Director of Central Hospital Ltd.

With a view to delivering health care services to the middle class people, that comprises most of our population, Central Hospital Ltd. started its journey. The objective was to not rise the cost of the health care services and maintain a standard so that it remains within the capability of most of the population.

Dr M A Quasem, who is the founder director of the hospital and founder of Adhunik (an anti-smoking campaign based organisation) and also involved with many other organisations shared his view about the health care situation of our country with StarHealth recently.

First of all, he stressed on poor number and quality of nurses of our country. He said, "It is our failure that we could not produce quality nurses and there is almost no initiative of any government to scale up these health care professionals." He explained that obviously doctors pay little time for the patients, but nurses have to stay with the patients round the clock to support them. This is why, improvement of the quality of nurses is most important. "Our nurses have no recognition in abroad since there is no graduation course in our country for the nurses" he added. He draws the attention of concerned bodies to pay their kind attention in this sector. Because, it is the nurses who can ensure quality health care services.

In comparison to other countries where our people usually seek quality health care services, Dr Quasem opined that our system lags behind due to the poor number of quality nurses.

He also noticed that we do not have good number of specialised doctors in every discipline of medical practice.

Dr Quasem expressed that we need to increase the opportunities of making post graduate doctors (specialised doctors) to serve our people better. He said, "It is really difficult for the government to meet all the

demands of the country since we have huge population. There are many private institutes who have earned reputation in their respective fields. If the government permits them to open faculty in those institutes, it would be easier to build skilled health care professionals there."

"There is a common allegation against our doctors that patients experience hardly good behaviour from our doctors", Dr Quasem expressed with grief. "But doctors from India, Thailand and Singapore have good reputation in this field", he added. "To satisfy the patients, our doctors should be careful about this" he suggested. He also recommended to include behavioural science in the medical curriculum.

Dr Quasem draws the attention of the authorities of recently built giant health care providers, who are helping in cost-hike in delivering health care services to think about the people of the country. Instead, he urged them to introduce services that are not available in the country, since they have good set-up. To stabilise the cost, Dr Quasem suggests the government to define criteria to set the cost of the health care facilities in the country.

He also urged the senior and experienced teaching staffs in different medical college hospitals not to leave their noble profession running only for money. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare should also be concerned.

Describing the services of Central Hospital Ltd, Dr Quasem informed that they try hard to maintain standard in all aspects of services, which is reflected in the hospital occupancy. For example, he said, "We even culture the supplied food, utensils of the hospital and routinely check the health status of the hospital staffs to prevent hospital acquired infections among the patients." Dr Quasem urged other hospitals to ensure standard in providing health care services.

Circumcision's anti-AIDS effect found greater than first thought

STAR HEALTH DESK

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Circumcision may provide even more protection against AIDS than was realised when two clinical trials in Africa were stopped two months ago because the results were so clear, according to studies.

The trials, in Kenya and Uganda,

were stopped early by the National Institutes of Health, which was paying for them, because it was apparent that circumcision reduced a man's risk of contracting AIDS from heterosexual sex by about half. It would have been unethical to continue without offering circumcision to all 8,000 men in the trials, federal health officials said.

That decision, announced on December 13, made headlines around the world and led the two largest funds for fighting AIDS to say they would consider paying for circumcisions in high-risk countries. But the final data from the trials suggest that circumcision reduces a man's risk by as much as 65 percent.

WORLD HEALTH DAY 2007

International health security

World Health Day (celebrated in April 7) marks the founding of the World Health Organisation (WHO). It is an occasion to raise awareness of key global health issues.

International health security is the first line of defence against health shocks that can devastate people, societies and economies worldwide. Implementation of the International Health Regulations (IHR) from June 2007 will help to build and strengthen mechanisms for outbreak alert and response at national and international levels, and contribute to making the world

more secure. To mark World Health Day 2007, a high-level global debate on 2 April 2007 in Singapore will raise the profile of international health security. The debate, involving the WHO Director-General together with political and opinion leaders, will be a dynamic forum to discuss health security challenges and find solutions for how partners can work together to prepare for and respond to acute threats to health.

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Antibiotics contaminate livestock, including poultry, cattle, pigs and veal calves. It is also possible for them to contaminate milk.

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There are regulations stipulating a minimum time before milking or slaughtering to permit the antibiotics to be administered. The widespread use of antibiotics causes drug resistant strains of bacteria.

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Canthaxanthin is added to food which is fed to farmed salmon and trout to enhance the colour of their pink flesh. Similarly the yellow colour of egg yolks can be enhanced.

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Fertilisers, which contain nitrate, potash, and phosphates, are used to increase the growth and yields of crops. They 'leach out'

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The solution to maximise mineral intake and minimise toxin exposure is to use organic foods.

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The European Union (EU) has set standards for the production, processing and control of organic farming — the fertility of the soil needs to be built; chemicals and non-renewable resources have to be minimum usage; environmental damage and pollution have to be minimised; the work must be in accordance with nature; the welfare of the animals being farmed must be taken into account; minimum processing and additives must be used.

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Genetically modified foods have the potential to create new toxins in crops and animals.

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Pasturing livestock and poultry is conventional practice.

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In biodynamic farming, the soil and crops are fertilised utilising natural methods.

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Freshness is important. If they do not reach the consumers in time they may lose nutritional value.

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The loss of vitality and vitamins will negate the advantages of being grown without chemicals.

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Old-fashioned clinical areas with high ceilings and large windows provide greatest protection. Natural ventilation costs little and is maintenance-free," they added.

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Experts are looking at these factors in trying to prepare for a pandemic of influenza.

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"The current practice of sealing in the local environment is probably the wrong route for hospital wards," Peter Wilson of University College London Hospitals added in a commentary on the study.

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Your Doctor

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The writer is a student of Life Science and Nutritional Medicine.