

Vaginal Plastic Surgery

May Help Women with “Problem” Areas

By **Andrea Lukes, M.D., M.H.Sc., F.A.C.O.G.**

Plastic surgery is hugely popular in the United States and worldwide. Usually, this is done to improve a “problem” area.

An increasing number of women and young girls are seeking medical and surgical consultation for the appearance of their external genitalia and vagina. How health care providers handle such consultation can impact an individual.

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Although I rarely perform elective procedures that relate to changing the appearance of the external genitalia and vagina, I am supportive of women who have carefully consider all of the issues involved in having such a procedure. Any “problem” area, if

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The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists issued a committee opinion, which states (September, 2007):

So-called “vaginal rejuvenation,” “designer vaginoplasty,” “revirgination, and “G-spot amplification” are vaginal surgical procedures being offered by some practitioners. These procedures are not medically indicated, and the safety and effectiveness of these procedures have not been documented. Clinicians who receive requests from patients for such procedures should discuss with the patient the reason for her request and perform an evaluation for any physical signs or symptoms that may indicate the need for surgical intervention. Women should be informed about the lack of data supporting the efficacy of these procedures and their potential complications, including infection, altered sensation, dyspareunia, adhesions and scarring.

Explaining the risks of any procedures is standard of care. The safety and effective-

ness of a procedure must be measured carefully before deciding to move forward with a procedure or surgery.

One expert in Raleigh is Cynthia Diehl, M.D., F.A.C.S., of Diehl Plastic Surgery. She is a board-certified plastic surgeon who has developed an expertise with vaginal and vulvar plastic surgery. As she purports through her website (www.diehlplastics.com), “plastic surgery, whether it is cosmetic or reconstructive, empowers the patient by giving them control over their appearance, their image and ultimately their self-esteem.”

I recently asked Dr. Diehl to explain her approach to women who present with concerns about their external genitalia. She emphasized the following: “The focus of my vaginal rejuvenation practice is reduction of the labia minora. When the labia minora (hairless inner labia) protrude beyond the labia majora (outer, hair bearing labia), it can be physically irritating and socially dis-

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treasing. There are certain trends (shaving, waxing, tight yoga pants) that have made patients more aware of this anatomy.”

Given the increased availability of information on the internet, many women research this area of plastic surgery. This can have positive and negative impacts. The positive can be that women feel more comfortable discussing something that is bothersome to them.

Dr. Diehl notes that excessively large labia minora (and the definition of what is excessively large varies significantly from woman to woman) can be inhibiting and/or frustrating. Some women may complain of irritation and “pinching” when exercising or sitting, discomfort with intercourse, moisture retention, visibility in tight clothing and social anxiety about an area that they feel is disproportionately large.

I have seen many women who request labiaplasty – and I refer them to Dr. Diehl. She is able to perform this within an office setting and under local anesthesia. It takes approximately one hour. If a woman prefers general anesthesia, Dr. Diehl is able to provide this within her office. Diehl Plastic Surgery has a fully certified operating room when a woman needs more anesthesia.

Finally, Dr. Diehl explains that the vulva (including the labia minora) heals well, and there is minimal downtime from having labiaplasty. She recommends some change in exercise routines for the first month.

As I discussed this with Dr. Diehl, what impressed me is the high patient satisfaction that she has found. Given the limited number of experts in this area of North Carolina, I recommend my own patients to Dr. Diehl for consultation.

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