



## IS FOR LABIA LIPO

It's official: labia lipo and fanny facelifts are the new boob jobs. Figures just released by The Harley Medical Group show ops like labia reductions and vaginal tightening – the so-called 'designer vagina' trend – are their fastest growing area of surgery, with a 55% increase in demand from 2007 to 2008, compared to a 27% rise in the number of boob jobs during the same time.

Transform clinics report a 210% increase in vaginal-tightening ops from 2006 to 2008, while SurgiCare has seen a staggering 700% increase in women asking about labia-reduction surgery. Plastic surgeon Dalia Nield, who runs the UK's only all-female operating team at The London Clinic, says, "Suddenly, more and more women are becoming aware of what's possible. And many who have lived for years with a vagina they hate are finally deciding to change it."

So just what can doctors do to make your vagina more attractive? Prices start from £2,500 and the key operations are: **Labiaplasty:** Some women have one labia longer than the other, or have lips up to three times the normal length, giving the appearance of a mangled cauliflower. This can make wearing tight clothes or having sex uncomfortable, because the lips rub. Surgeons cut a V-shaped section of flesh from one or both lips, reducing the size.

**Vaginoplasty:** Just as the skin on your face ages, so too does the skin inside your vagina. And giving birth stretches your insides. During this, surgeons repair muscles and the result is a tighter vagina.

**Pubic-mound fat removal:** It's not just the size of our bums and tums that bothers us – some women think their privates are fat, too. So surgeons remove deposits from the area above the vagina.

**Clitoris correction:** Surgeons can reduce the size of the clitoral hood to

make it more exposed, and therefore easier to stimulate during sex.

Most surgery is carried out under general anaesthetic, and the area is painful and tender for up to a fortnight afterwards. There's a sex ban in place for at least six weeks, but, afterwards, most women find their self-confidence takes off – and, with it, their sex life. "Often, when women come to me for the first consultation, they cry the whole way through," says Dalia Nield. "When I see them after surgery, they have become a different person. These operations transform lives."

But they are not without risks. Mike Bowen, a consultant gynaecologist, who performs vaginal surgery, says, "I've heard of procedures being carried out with only a local anaesthetic, while the patient stands up in a consulting room. That's humiliating and potentially dangerous. Plus, the new laser surgery being introduced from the States and hailed as a 'wonder treatment' basically involves burning the flesh to shrink it – like cooking meat. It can leave terrible scars and kill all feeling in the area. These are incredibly delicate ops and women need to choose their surgeon very carefully." Dalia Nield agrees: "A lot of my work involves correcting botched operations. The 'designer vagina' tag makes women think they can buy new private parts, just as they would a new outfit – but this is major surgery and needs to be taken seriously."

● For information, contact Transform ([www.transforminglives.co.uk](http://www.transforminglives.co.uk)), The Harley Medical Group ([www.harleymedical.co.uk](http://www.harleymedical.co.uk)), SurgiCare ([www.surgicare.co.uk](http://www.surgicare.co.uk)), The London Clinic ([www.thelondonclinic.co.uk](http://www.thelondonclinic.co.uk)), Mike Bowen ([www.mrbowen.co.uk](http://www.mrbowen.co.uk)) or Professor Darty ([www.prof.darty.com](http://www.prof.darty.com))



Before surgery (left): the inner labia protrude from the outer labia. After surgery (right): labiaplasty has reduced the size of the inner labia

your down-there *A-Z*

## I LOVE MY NEW VAGINA



Susan\*, 28, a product development manager from Kent, paid £2,400 for labiaplasty in 2006

"Ever since I first became aware of my body as a teenager, I hated my vagina.

The inner lips were larger than the outer ones and they looked wonky. I'd never change in front of friends and, when I got my first boyfriend at 18, I always made sure I wore knickers until the lights were off. Sex felt OK, but I was still terrified he'd notice and tell his friends that I wasn't normal.

I didn't dare wear tight trousers, and avoided going swimming, because I was convinced you could see my funny shape through the costume.

I thought I'd be hiding myself forever, but, in 2005, I read an article about vaginal surgery. I went online and found a clinic near me. Even when I went for the first consultation, I wasn't sure I was going to go through with the surgery. I thought my vagina was ugly, but I was still scared. What if something went wrong and I ended up looking worse?

I'd met my current boyfriend, Mark\*, just a month before the consultation. Although our sex life was great, I was still terrified he'd find my bits a turn-off. So, after a couple of drinks the week before my

## 'I was terrified my boyfriend would find my bits a turn-off'

consultation, I blurted out I hated the shape of my vagina and was going to have surgery to make it smaller. I froze, waiting for his response. Mark looked so shocked, but listened as I explained how I'd hated myself for years, and how it made me embarrassed to be naked. He reassured me that he'd never noticed anything weird. It did make me wonder if I needed surgery, but this was something I wanted to do.

At the consultation, the surgeon explained I might lose sensitivity, if nerve endings were damaged during the surgery, and that, because it's such a hot, humid area, the risk of infection is quite high. But I felt really comfortable that I was in safe hands. I was so excited about looking 'normal' for the first time that I forgot my nerves. I took out a loan to cover the £2,400 cost. A few days before my op, I confided in my sister and best friend. They gave me huge hugs and offered to come with me to the Chaucer Hospital in Canterbury on the day of my op. They drove me home after surgery – making jokes about the rubber ring I'd been given to sit on for a week while I was off work. The hardest thing was sleeping; I could only lie on my back, popping painkillers. Mark and I looked down there as soon as I got home, and I was shocked how black and blue I was – like I'd been beaten. He was amazing. He even helped me wash the stitches in salt baths. When we had sex for the first time six weeks later, I was scared it might hurt, but, apart from some tingling, it was fantastic. I even had the confidence to whip off my knickers before getting into bed." >