VULVAR SELF-EXAMINATION

How to Perform Vulvar Self-Examination: A Step-by-Step Guide

Who should perform VSE?

All women are encouraged to perform vulvar self-examination regularly.

What do I need?

- *Clean hands*
- *A small mirror*
- *Good lighting*
- *A private space*

What should I look for?

During your VSE, be on the lookout for the following signs:

- *Any new or changing lumps, bumps, or sores*
- *Redness, swelling, or irritation*
- *Bleeding*
- *Changes in color or texture of the skin*
- *Pain or discomfort during examination*

How often?

Perform vulvar self-examination preferably once every three months or at any time when you experience vulvar itching or pain, pain during sex, or when you detect vulvar lumps or thickening of the skin.

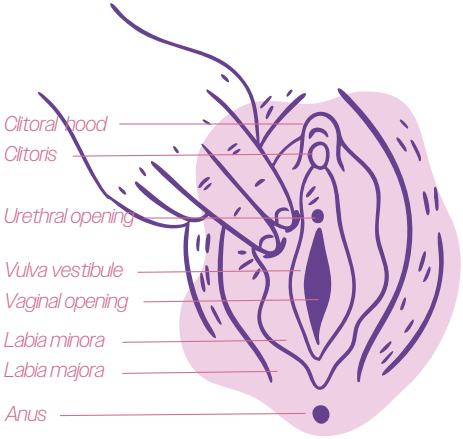
LET'S START:

Find a comfortable and private space where you can lie down or sit with your knees bent and legs slightly apart. You may use a mirror to help you see better during the examination. The mirror can be held with one hand, placed on the floor, or in the bidet.

1

EXAMINATION:

General Examination.
Examine the whole external genital area. Use your index and medium fingers to gently spread the labia (the folds of skin around the vaginal opening) and visually inspect the external genital area.



2

PALPATION:

Palpate the area for abnormalities. Using your fingers, carefully feel the entire vulvar area, including the labia majora and minora, for any unusual lumps, tenderness, or areas of thickening. Pay attention to any changes in sensation or discomfort.

EXAMINATION: Detailed Examination

- Begin at the 12 o'clock position, focusing on the clitoris.
- Gently separate the labia majora. Apply delicate pressure to the labia majora on both sides, moving in a clockwise direction until you return to the 12 o'clock position.
- Repeat the process with the labia minora on both sides.
- Examine the clitoris for any abnormalities or changes. The clitoral hood should be gently retracted, if possible.
- Proceed to the examination of the vestibule: the mucosal part around the vaginal opening.
- Finally, move downwards to examine the perianal area for any abnormalities or changes.

NOTE:

3

Note your findings.
Keep a record of your findings, including any changes or abnormalities you notice during the examination. You might consider using your cell phone to take photographic records, then save the photos securely for your privacy.
This can help you track any changes over time and serve as a valuable information to your healthcare provider if needed.

REPORT:

4

Follow up with your healthcare provider. If you notice any unusual or concerning findings during your VSE, don't hesitate to contact your healthcare provider for further evaluation. They can provide guidance, perform additional tests if necessary, and address any concerns you may have.

In conclusion:

REMEMBER: early detection is the code so don't hesitate to reach out to your healthcare provider if you have any concern.

ESGO

The European Society of Gynaecological Oncology (ESGO) is a leading society in the field of gynaecological oncology and sets as its aim to improve the health and well-being of women with gynaecological cancers through advocacy, prevention, research, excellence in care and education. Since its formation, ESGO has developed a strong infrastructure of almost 3500 members and a network of early-career doctors, patient advocacy groups, centres of excellence and a variety of research groups across Europe and globally.

ENGAGe

The European Network of Gynaecological Cancer Advocacy Groups (ENGAGe) is the ESGO network of European patient advocacy groups. It represents all gynaecological cancers (particularly ovarian, endometrial, cervical, vulvar, and rare cancers). Its goal is the prevention of gynaecological cancers, access to the best treatment, and empowering a patient-centric approach to gynaecological cancer care through research, prevention, awareness, advocacy, and education.

ISSVD

The International Society for the Study of Vulvovaginal Disease (ISSVD) is a global leader dedicated to advancing the diagnosis, treatment, and scientific understanding of conditions affecting the vulva, vagina, and related structures. Its goals are promotion of international communication among gynaecologists, pathologists, dermatologists, and other healthcare providers, to establish international agreement on terminology and definitions of vulvovaginal diseases and to promote clinical investigation, basic research and dissemination of knowledge in this field.

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