

# Surprising Vagina Facts You've Never Heard Before

M Judy Koutsky



When Mary C., a mom to three girls in Brooklyn, New York, learned about “down there” in Catholic school, there was a lot left unsaid. “Basically, all the nuns taught us is that babies make their appearance in the area,” she recounts. Otherwise, the vagina was not something you talked about and certainly not something you questioned. “It was there for baby-making and that was it,” she recalls.

For many girls and women, the vagina is something vaguely mysterious and not something brought up in polite conversation. Yet questions still linger: What’s considered normal? Can certain exercises really get it into shape? What about the G-spot? Here, vagina facts you may not know:

- 1. It can stretch to unbelievable lengths.** OK, so if you’ve had a [vaginal birth](#), you know your lady parts can *stretch* — but you’ve probably never heard the actual numbers before. “The cervix, which is located at the very top of the vagina, stretches to about four inches, so that a newborn baby’s head can pass out of the uterus and into the vagina. It’s also elastic enough to accommodate the irregular contour of a baby pushing her way out,” says [Eric B. Grossman](#), MD, an ob-gyn in Voorhees, NJ. If you tear during birth, the good news is that the vagina has a tremendous blood supply and can quickly and easily heal itself. Plus, after birth the vagina has the ability to shrink back to a more normal width.
- 2. There’s often a battle of the bacteria going on down there.** “A healthy vagina has its own bacterial ecosphere,” says

[Carol Queen](#), PhD, staff sexologist at Good Vibrations, an online retailer of sex toys. “Problems occur when there’s an overgrowth of one kind [such as yeast, which causes in a yeast infection], or when an outside bacterial strain enters, like e. Coli.” In fact, [bacterial vaginosis](#) — a painful, itchy condition often accompanied by discharge — is the most common vaginal infection in women. Avoid the bad bacteria by eating yogurt, wiping from front to back after going to the restroom, or taking a probiotic.

**3. Orgasms from intercourse alone are rare.** Sex should be pleasurable and fun, and it would be great if women could have an orgasm every time they have sexual intercourse. “In reality, however, most of the time women do not orgasm during intercourse,” says Dr. Grossman. He explains that sexual arousal includes a process where blood flow increases to the vagina, labia, and the areas around the clitoris. Increased sensitivity and stimulation leads to an intense pleasure sensation and involuntary contractions of smooth muscles in the pelvic floor. These sensitive areas, however, are not always stimulated during intercourse. “Far more women orgasm during oral sex,” adds Dr. Queen.

**4. Vaginas come in all shapes and sizes.** “Length is somewhat consistent, but the width, appearance, and external features, such as the labia, can vary widely,” says Dr. Grossman. He explains that much of the variation is attributable to changes from childbirth, a woman’s hormonal levels, or genetics. “Some women compare themselves to pictures and think that their vaginas are abnormal, but vaginas can vary as much as all other body parts can vary.”

**5. Tampons can’t actually get lost up there.** You’ve probably heard of [Toxic Shock Syndrome](#), a rare condition that can result if a tampon is left in the vagina too long and dangerous levels of bacterial toxins develop (it’s recommend to change tampons every four to six hours). However, you can’t actually lose a tampon in your vagina. “You should be able to feel all the way inside your vagina to the cervix, so tampons can be removed even if the string can’t be felt,” says Dr. Grossman. “If you are concerned that you can’t find a tampon inside, your doctor can look for it and remove it before the toxins build.”

**6. There’s an art to the Kegel.** [Kegel exercises](#) entail squeezing the pelvic floor muscles (those muscles you squeeze when you really have to pee) for about 10 seconds and releasing for 10 seconds, for 10 to 20 reps. “For women with mild stress urinary incontinence (SUI) symptoms, performing Kegel exercises a few times each day can help rebuild the muscles that strengthen the vagina and can improve bladder control,” says Dr. Grossman. Kegel exercises can also help women experience more pleasure during sex and have more intense orgasms. But, doing Kegels incorrectly (using too much force or over exercising) can lead to pain during sex and other problems, like vaginismus, a painful, involuntary clenching of the vagina, says Dr. Queen. So do your exercises, but don’t go overboard.

**7. In addition to the G-spot, there’s an A-spot and a U-spot.** You’ve probably heard of the G-spot, a collection of sensitive tissue located approximately one third into your vagina, but did you know there is also an “A-spot,” which can be found a little farther north than the G-spot? “The anterior fornix erogenous zone, or A-spot, is not as spoken about, but it’s believed to increase lubrication and stimulate orgasmic contractions,” says [Kecia Gaither](#), MD, Director of Perinatal Outreach at Montefiore Medical Center and Albert Einstein College of Medicine, in the Bronx, New York. But wait, there’s a third sensitive spot: “The U-spot is a small patch of sensitive tissue located just above that and on either side of the urethral opening, with strong erotic potential when stimulated,” says Dr. Gaither.

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