

Vaginal rejuvenation is still a taboo topic. Here's what experts want you to know



By [Arti Patel](#) · Global News

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It's a topic women still don't want to talk about, experts say. Here's what you need to know about vaginal rejuvenation. Getty Images

If you've ever seen ads for vaginal rejuvenation, you may think about making the vagina look "younger."

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The term itself is incredibly vague, and gynaecologists like Dr. Farid Abdel Hadi of Whitby, Ont., say many physicians don't agree with the term or its definition. "We agree on the common meaning of 'make young again,' but this is as vague as it gets," he told Global News. "Vaginal rejuvenation means making the vagina feel, work, or function 'young' again."

Dr. Julie Khanna of ICLS Dermatology & Plastic Surgery in Oakville, Ont. adds that vaginal rejuvenation is an umbrella term encompassing many aspects of vaginal-related procedures.

"It is a treatment of the vulva and the vagina for concerns that women have, including medical and aesthetic," she said. "This includes treatments in the form of surgery and non-surgical options."

Some of the most common procedures, she adds, include vaginal tightening, labiaplasty (altering the labia minora and the labia majora) and even procedures that add fat to the labia majora.

Earlier this week, the [US Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\) published a warning to consumers](#), adding some devices used for vaginal rejuvenation may have serious side effects.

"We've recently become aware of a growing number of manufacturers marketing 'vaginal rejuvenation' devices to women and claiming these procedures will treat conditions and symptoms related to menopause, urinary incontinence or sexual function," the statement said. "The procedures use lasers and other energy-based devices to destroy or reshape vaginal tissue. These products have serious risks and don't have adequate evidence to support their use for these purposes. We are deeply concerned women are being harmed."

Energy devices

Khanna adds that these energy-based devices include anything that can deliver energy, including lights, lasers and radio frequency. "I'm glad the FDA is shedding light on these topics, we need more openness [with] vaginal procedures. We need more evidence-based studies that are concrete so we can say this device works and this one doesn't."

These devices heat the tissue to a certain preset temperature range, Hadi said.

"The ideal temperature should be high enough to stimulate the tissues. The vagina will start growing new tissues and new blood vessels. This will also bring along tissue growth factors and certain tissue building cells that will 'rejuvenate' the vagina and the tissues around it," he explained. "Naturally, the ideal temperature should be below the temperature range that may cause tissue damage or destruction."

He adds there are two main technologies, lasers and radio frequency, and many are being tested to see their side effects. "The thing that most of these devices have in common is that most of them have shown some benefit for treatment of mild laxity and have shown improvement in intimacy," he continued. "Do not expect, though, to get the results of surgery without having actual surgery done."

Health Canada is also responsible for monitoring what vendors and suppliers are doing with these devices and have even told vendors in the past to stop making claims that weren't scientifically proven, Hadi adds.

"Some vendors will only sell their machine if a properly licensed MD works with the buying party. Others will only deliver the vaginal treatment set to a physician's care to make sure only a qualified professional will use them."

Unfortunately, people don't always go to board-certified specialists and end up having risky procedures. "They don't go to people who are going to follow up and do the due diligence when they look at machinery," Khanna said.

The taboos around it

But women are still uncomfortable to talk about their changing vaginas. Itchiness, dryness or even tightening vaginal canals are still considered taboo topics, Khanna said, which is a problem.

"We don't talk about female sexuality, it's accepted to talk about erectile dysfunction, but it was not until recently we talked about issues that affect women," she said. "The internet has been the only place that has given us [knowledge] because many women are quiet about this."

She adds that new technology has allowed professionals to offer patients more options, but at the end of the day, women shouldn't feel ashamed or judged for wanting to "rejuvenate" that part of their body.

"I see so many women who say they didn't know where to go or who to talk to... they don't want to even talk to their friends about it."

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Finding a professional

If vaginal rejuvenation is something you're considering, make sure you understand the risks and options.

"Reputable spas and medi spas will arrange a consult for you with a qualified physician," Hadi explained. "You will then be advised on the pros and cons of the treatment you are getting, as well as possible other modalities of treatment that may benefit you. They might even sometimes tell you that this treatment is not good for you."

Always ask questions, preferably to a physician who specializes in the area you're treating.

"Do the same research that you would do before seeing a dentist. It is about your health so take good care of it."