

Advice for vulva owners

This selection of advice offers young people guidance on how to feel comfortable with their own bodies. You can edit the advice to fit the target age group.

Advice for young British Asian people on dealing with a lack of representation

Look your vagina in the eye! Don't be scared of it. Don't think it's going to stop you from anything. It's easy to be 15 or 20 and have a chorus of voices saying "You can't do this," or "You're not meant to do that," and to feel trapped by it. But really – this sounds so cheesy – it lies in you.

If you have confidence and swag and you believe in yourself – and you believe in your vulva – the sky's the limit.

– Poppy Jay

Try and find imagery that represents you. It's out there! For me, it was going back and looking through nudie Indian drawings from the 18th century of really beautiful, big-boobed women on Hindu temples. We have a narrow range of what we think beauty is but actually, it's so freeing to see the things that other people think are sexy, and find yourself in them. If you're just on that same stream that everybody else is, you'll never find the thing that's yours.

– Rubina Pabani

Advice for young trans people on coping with body changes

Learning to be comfortable with yourself first helps. You can build up confidence that way, before engaging with new people.

The way you think you're going to feel about things is not necessarily the way you think about them when they happen. Nothing is how you think it's going to be, so expect the unexpected.

The prospect of having genitals that might be perceived as 'other' can invoke a lot of internalised transphobia. We are indoctrinated into a cisnet society, where we're taught that genitals are meant to look a certain way. But genitals are unique from person to person and entirely ungendered! Vulvas are for everybody and can be referred to using whatever words work for you.

Be patient with yourself while figuring out your new anatomy. It can be a bit strange – and even full-on awkward – to have your genitals change as an adult. With the physical changes of bottom growth come new sensations, too.

– Vic Jouvert

Advice for young people on the pressure of pornography

Don't look at porn for body examples. I think it's unrealistic to say just cut it out – for some people that might work, but for others it won't. But fill your life with positive representation too.

If you're a heterosexual man reading this, try to watch more realistic porn. Know that porn is fantasy, it's not real life. Educate yourself about feminism and body acceptance. Follow accounts like Ungirl and others. You've got a lot of unlearning to do as well! It's challenging but we'll all be happier when we normalise vulvas.

– Catriona Lygate

Advice for young people who feel their vulva isn't 'normal'

We've probably all worried whether our vulva looks normal at some point. This is a totally natural feeling and it's a good question, because vulvas show an incredible level of diversity. From labia length to skin colour and texture, each one is uniquely beautiful. Think of vulvas as being like snowflakes: no two are completely alike!

Labia vary A LOT! The labia can be longer, shorter, asymmetrical, frilly and curved, so they might look very different from others you've seen. The labia do a really important job of keeping your genitals safe so, no matter what they look like, they keep you healthy and help you experience pleasure.

Vulvas have a natural smell, produce discharge and lubrication, have pubic hair and can have moles, skin tags and darker skin than the rest of the body.

Start following accounts like The Vulva Gallery, or buy their book. They showcase hundreds of drawings of people's vulvas. Everyone looks different, but you quickly see that they are all beautiful.

– Catriona Lygate

Advice for young people who are considering surgery (labiaplasty) to alter their vulva

I used to wish so badly that my vulva looked a certain way, the same way that I thought every vulva was 'meant' to look. But now I'm so aware of how different we all are, and how much beauty comes from our differences, I would never change her now.

We are all so unique, and so beautiful just the way we are, and one day our eyes will see what everyone else has always seen. The only thing we ever really need to change is how we see ourselves.

– Lydia Reeves

Speaking to friends about your insecurity can help. There's a sense of community – not only feeling different, but also feeling this pressure to change together.

– EC

Loving your vulva is an ongoing process and you might have days or weeks when you dislike it, but that's okay. Just know that you and your body deserve love: that's fundamental.

– Catriona Lygate

Advice for young people on connecting with their vulva

Just know that it will get easier. It's OK if the first time – or the tenth time – you look at your vulva, you feel a bit strange. It's just about patience. Try to spend time with your body, whether that's your vulva or other parts of yourself. Start seeing your body as a relationship that you take seriously in your life and that you prioritise. Care for your body and start to acknowledge the things it does for you.

Try to surround yourself with positive influences. Follow vulva accounts and start to see the diversity of vulvas as a beautiful expression of nature, because that's what it is.

– Catriona Lygate

Advice for young people with a disability on lack of information available

I found online sex-positive communities really informative and a helpful way to find out things that I couldn't anywhere else. We became a supportive bubble that understood what each other were going through.

– Ginny