

Patient information guide / information leaflet on LABIAPLASTY

Introduction

You are considering labial reduction (aesthetic genital surgery) with The Haumea Clinic. There is a lot of information which you need to know and understand before making this decision and this booklet covers all the general information which we think will be helpful for you. More specific information to you, as an individual, will be discussed when you meet the surgeon.

Our aims are to:

- Provide patient focused services centred around safety and quality
- Provide patients with clear and accurate information in order that informed decisions can be made in relation to aesthetic procedures and treatments.

What could these procedures do for you?

Women seeking labia reduction surgery do so for several reasons, these include

- Labia that are perceived to be too large can cause embarrassment
- Overly large labia may also cause discomfort during everyday activities and may appear noticeable in tight clothing

Women who have undergone labia reduction inform us that they may,

- feel more confident about themselves
- experience less discomfort and be able to wear tight fitting clothing

Your reasons for seeking labia reduction are personal to you and the surgeon will discuss with you your expectations and desires of surgery, and balance these against what you can reasonably expect from surgery. Please remember that your surgeon cannot guarantee how you will feel about your genitalia after surgery, the surgeon can only reduce the labia.

What does labia reduction involve?

The inner lips of the vagina are known as the labia minora. In labia reduction; a section of the labia is excised to reduce the extent of protuberance.

The operation is carried out under local or general anaesthetic. There is information about general anaesthesia later in this booklet and your Consultant Anaesthetist will speak to you about this on the day of your operation. The operation time will vary from patient to patient depending on which procedures are performed but usually takes 1 to 2 hours.

The incisions will be stitched with dissolvable stitches. You will either be able to go home on the same day or you may stay 1 night in hospital, your surgeon will advise on the length of stay.

Are there any Risks?

All surgery carries with it the possibility that complications can occur. Through your journey with the Haumea Clinic every care and attention will be extended to you before, during and after your surgery; however, this does not mean that you will not experience a complication and this section details the possible risks and complications; please read this carefully. Your surgeon will discuss these with you in more detail during the consultation and you can ask as many questions as you want.

Short Term Effects and Complications after Surgery

You are likely to have some swelling and bruising for a couple of weeks after surgery and you may experience some discomfort or pain which is usually controlled with pain killers. However, pain thresholds do vary from person to person. You may feel sharp short lived pains in the area of surgery for the first few weeks and have either decreased or increased sensitivity around the surgical sites. If you experience any unusual symptoms then please contact your surgeon.

Discomfort

You may experience discomfort; a burning or stinging sensation, when urinating in the first couple of weeks after surgery.

Bleeding (haematoma)

Some patients experience bleeding, this may happen immediately after surgery but could happen up to 2 weeks after. If this does occur, you may need to go back to theatre. Limited activity for a week or two after surgery reduces this risk.

Infection

Whilst infection is not common following aesthetic genital surgery, it is a possible complication following any surgical procedure. To reduce the risks of experiencing an infection it is important to follow all the pre- and post-operative advice given to you and this includes giving up smoking before and after your surgery. Signs of infection include swelling, tenderness, redness of the skin, a discharge from the wound and you may feel unwell and have a raised temperature; you should contact your surgeon as soon as possible if you think you have an infection. Rarely, you may need to return to hospital for further treatment if you do experience an infection.

Delayed wound healing/necrosis

The way wounds heal varies from patient to patient and some patients experience a delay in their wound healing process. Again, following the advice and guidance given to you and stopping smoking will help to ensure your best possible recovery. Very rarely poor healing may result due to necrosis (dead tissue), the wound will not heal until this is removed. The wound care of patients with delayed healing will be longer than usual and they may need to attend the clinic frequently.

Allergic reactions

Please make sure you inform your surgeon of any allergies you have. Some patients experience reactions to dressings/stitches used as part of their surgery. Also, if dissolvable sutures are used in some patients these do not dissolve as intended.

Deep vein thrombosis/pulmonary embolism

A rare but serious complication of surgery and anaesthesia is the formation of a blood clot in veins, (usually the legs) that can move to the lungs interfering with their usual function. Before surgery your likely risk of this occurring will be assessed and appropriate measures taken to reduce the risk. After surgery; avoid dehydration, remain mobile and follow any other guidance given. If you experience sudden chest pain or breathlessness seek urgent medical advice without delay.

Medium to Long Term Effects and Complications

Ongoing Asymmetry

It is important that you do not expect to have perfectly symmetrical labia as this is not achievable. It is normal to have some slight asymmetry of the labia.

Possible permanent numbness

Initial increased or decreased sensitivity usually resolves over the first few months, however, some patients may experience a decrease or total loss of sensation permanently.

Poor scarring

The scars associated with labia reduction usually heal well but the time this takes will vary from person to person. The labia scars will not be totally symmetrical. A small number of patients experience red and raised scars. If you experience delayed healing or an infection it is likely that this will adversely affect the quality of your scars.

Longevity of surgical outcome

It is important to understand that changes to your body; such as significant weight gain or pregnancy, after surgery may affect the outcome achieved.

Revision surgery

Revision is a possibility after any type of operation and labia reduction is no exception.

Subjectivity

It is important to understand there is always a subjective element to the assessment of the outcome of a cosmetic surgery procedure. It is possible therefore that, even if your surgeon believes your surgical outcome is good, you might be disappointed. It is therefore important that you inform your surgeon clearly what you are hoping to achieve from surgery.

You will be advised of the probable results but this should not be interpreted as a guarantee. Your surgeon will try to listen to your hopes, and give you a realistic expectation as to what can be achieved from surgery.

This list of possible risks and complications is not exhaustive. Your surgeon will discuss the general risks and complications of labia reduction and any specific limitations and risks individual to you. We ask that, if the occurrence of any of the risks would significantly affect you with regard to your individual circumstances, that you make this known to your surgeon.

Your surgery will be performed under local or general anaesthesia.

What is anaesthesia?

Anaesthesia stops you feeling pain and other sensations.

It can be given in various ways and does not always make you unconscious.

Local anaesthesia numbs a small part of your body. It is used when the nerves can easily be reached by drops, sprays, ointments or injections. You stay awake but free from pain.

General anaesthesia gives a state of controlled unconsciousness. It is essential for some operations. You are unconscious and feel nothing.

Anaesthetists

You will meet your anaesthetist on the day of surgery before your operation. Anaesthetists are doctors with specialist training who:

- Discuss the type or types of anaesthetic that are suitable for your operation. If there are choices available, your anaesthetist will help you choose what is best for you
- Discuss the risks of anaesthesia with you
- Agree a plan with you for your anaesthetic and pain control
- Are responsible for giving your anaesthetic and for your wellbeing and safety throughout your surgery
- Manage any blood transfusions you may need
- Plan your care, if needed, in the intensive care unit

- Make your experience as calm and pain free as possible.

Questions you may like to ask your anaesthetist

- Who will give my anaesthetic?
- Do I have to have a general anaesthetic
- What type of anaesthetic do you recommend?
- Have you often used this type of anaesthetic?
- Will I be unconscious and completely unaware during this kind of anaesthetic?
- What are the risks of this type of anaesthetic?
- Do I have any special risks?
- How will I feel afterwards?

For more information regarding anaesthesia please refer to anaesthesia explained www.rcoa.ac.uk/document-store/anaesthesia-explained

Your patient journey with the Haumea Clinic

Your patient journey with the Haumea Clinic is made up of several stages and you will meet with a number of different people before, during and after your surgery.

Age Limit

The minimum age for any consultation or surgical procedure with the Haumea Clinic is 18. Ideally we prefer that patients defer surgery till after the age of 21 years, since maturation, sexual activity and childbirth often affects the appearance of the vulva. However, every woman is assessed and treated as an individual, and we will consider women who are aged 18 years and above.

The Haumea Clinic

Our clinic is registered with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) which is the regulator of health and social care in England. Information is included in the Patient Guide you will be given and is also available at the clinic. The clinic staff will be only too happy give you these details should you require them.

The confidentiality of your information is of paramount concern to the Haumea Clinic. To this end the Haumea Clinic complies fully with data protection legislation and medical confidentiality guidelines. The Haumea Clinic does not make the names and addresses of patients or inquirers available to any other organisation. Each time you attend the clinic you will be consulted or treated in a private room or treatment area.

The consultation with the surgeon

Feeling confident about your surgeon

We as surgeons are registered in the United Kingdom with the General Medical Council (GMC). We are on the GMC Specialist Register for gynaecology. Should you wish to check your surgeon's registration you can do so via www.gmc-uk.org/

Informed or valid consent

Patients have a fundamental legal and ethical right to decide what happens to their bodies. It is therefore essential that a patient has given valid consent for all treatments and investigations. Patients and surgeons should work together in partnership through a process of supported decision-making, with the surgeon providing the information the patient wants and needs to make a decision and ensuring the patient has understood the details and implications of what is involved.

For consent to be valid it must be

- Given by a person with the capacity to make the decision in question

- Given voluntarily
- Based on appropriate information (informed) and understood.

Your consultation with your surgeon

The purpose of the consultation with your surgeon is to ensure that you have the information you need to make an informed decision about treatment. The surgeon you see at your consultation will be the surgeon who will carry out surgery, should you elect to proceed. Therefore the surgeon will:

- Discuss your wishes, needs, views and expectations regarding any treatment you may seek to undertake.
- Carry out a thorough examination of the appropriate area
- Explain the outcome of this assessment
- Discuss your general health and medical history and any relevant family medical history and any pre-operative tests that will need to be conducted
- Explain the options for treatment and the likelihood of success of these options and how they will, or will not, achieve your goals
- Explain the risks and benefits of the various treatment options, including doing nothing, both in general terms and any risks and complications which are specific to you taking into account your expectations and the physical examination carried out.
- Explain what is involved in the surgical procedure, this will include the likely operating time, where the incisions will be, where the implants will be placed and how long you will stay in hospital.
- Explain any pre surgery requirements.
- Discuss what to expect when you are discharged from hospital, the healing process and recovery time and any post-operative instructions.

At this point you will know whether you are suitable for and will benefit from surgery. If for any reason you are not suitable to undergo surgery the surgeon will explain the reason for this and if there are any other options they are aware of which you may want to consider.

You will then have the opportunity to ask questions you may have. Listed below are some questions which the General Medical Council suggest you consider asking. We recommend you prepare your questions in advance of your consultation to ensure you remember all the questions that are important to you.

- Will you carry out the procedure yourself?
- Have you done this procedure before?
- What does the procedure involve and how long will it take?
- How long will it take me to recover?
- What sort of outcome can I expect?
- What are the potential risks and complications for me of the procedure?
- How long will the benefits last? Will I need the procedure done again?

- What potential cost are involved, including if anything goes wrong or needs to be repeated?
- What is covered (and not covered) by the aftercare provided?
- Are you insured? And what is the process if something goes wrong?

Additional questions are

- Does my GP need to know?
- How much scarring will there be?
- How much pain can I expect to experience?
- Will I be awake during surgery?

Once you are happy with all the information discussed with you the surgeon will obtain your informed consent. However, please understand that even once you have decided to go ahead with a procedure, you can change your mind at any stage. You may also want to return for a 2nd consultation with your surgeon and this will always be encouraged.

Time for Reflection – “Cooling Off” period

The Haumea Clinic recommends that, following your consultation, you take a minimum period of 14 days to consider all the benefits and risks of the procedure and seek more information, if necessary, before making your final decision. This is in line with guidance issued by the Royal College of Surgeons that patients seeking a cosmetic intervention should be given a 14 day cooling off period.

Making arrangements for surgery

There are several factors which you should take into account when planning the date of your surgery.

- The Haumea Clinic fees are payable prior to the surgery being conducted. Regrettably there may be a delay or even cancellation if payment is not made by the required due date.
- Consider the implications to your family especially if you have young children or are a carer, you may need to organise extra assistance as you will need to avoid heavy lifting and other strenuous activities for up to 6 weeks after surgery.
- Also, do not choose a date close to any important events that you have planned such as weddings or a holiday.
- Make allowances for time off work, this is typically 1 week, depending on the nature of your job. However, if you have a physically demanding job (e.g. police, army, driver, working with animals) you will need longer than usual to ensure your best possible recovery.

Before surgery

- We recommend you inform your GP about this surgery but there is no requirement to do this. Please understand, however, that your surgeon may need more information about your medical history to ensure your safety during surgery and therefore, if you decline, the surgeon may not be able to proceed to surgery.
 - Arrange a date for your pre surgery tests, as required by your surgeon. The nurse at your local clinic will carry out a pre surgical screening but you may be referred to your GP for other tests, if required.
 - Confirm that you have arranged for a reliable adult to be with you for 24 hours after your discharge.
 - Confirm you have arranged transport to and from the hospital. You will not be able to drive home when you are discharged and should not drive for at least 24 to 48 hours after general anaesthesia and you should not drive for 2 weeks after labia reduction.
 - Pack an overnight bag. Please do not take any valuables with you.
 - Ensure you take with you all the information we have given to you about your operation.
 - Keep us informed if there are any changes to your general health such as changes in any medication you are taking, a newly diagnosed condition, or if you have a cold or an infection.
 - Let us know immediately if you find out you are pregnant as your surgery will need to be cancelled.
 - Ensure you follow advice given to you regarding any medication you take. Stop taking any vitamins or herbal supplements including Omega and aspirin (unless this is prescribed to you by your doctor) for 2 weeks before your surgery.
 - You should continue taking HRT or the oral contraceptive pill unless your surgeon advises otherwise.
 - You should refrain from smoking, including the use of electronic cigarettes, for 4 weeks before surgery.
 - You should refrain from any recreational drugs for 4 weeks before surgery.
 - Avoid alcohol for 1 week before surgery.
 - Due to the increased risk of DVT you should not take a long haul flight for 2 weeks or a short haul flight (under 5 hours) for 24 hours before the date of surgery. If you are away in the days preceding your surgery please make sure we are able to contact you in case we need to clarify anything with you.
 - Stock up on meals to reduce the need to shop and cook the week after surgery.
- Other considerations
- If you are planning more children it may be better to complete your family first as pregnancy and vaginal delivery may affect the way the labia look.

Your hospital stay

Please ensure that you arrive at the hospital at time given to you. The surgeon will visit you in your room to answer any last minute questions you may have and to obtain your final consent to surgery. You will also meet the Consultant Anaesthetist who will discuss anaesthesia with you. After surgery, you will be asked to wear a sanitary towel, to absorb any oozing, which you should change daily until your first clinic nurse appointment. You will

either be a day case or stay overnight in hospital. You may be given some take home medications, please take these as indicated. Remember you cannot drive yourself home.

Post-operative care

The Haumea Clinic is committed to ensuring your recovery is as easy and comfortable as possible. Your future wellbeing is paramount and after surgery you should take note of the following.

- At consultation your surgeon will discuss your post-operative care.
- If you have any queries your local clinic should be your first point of contact and you will previously have been given out of hours contact information should you have any urgent medical concerns outside of normal working hours.
- If you are supplied with medicines to take home please take these as prescribed. Continue to take HRT or the birth control pill as normal, however, if you have been given antibiotics please note that these can interact with the birth control pill making it less effective, therefore other precautions are advised.
- Do not take any vitamin or herbal supplements including Omega or aspirin (unless this is prescribed to you by your doctor in which case continue to take as prescribed) for 2 weeks.
- An appointment will be made for you to see the surgeon between 7 to 14 days after surgery, the exact timing will be dependent upon your surgeon's individual instructions. At this appointment, the wounds will be checked and advice given in line with your surgeon's instructions.
- A further appointment will be required to review and assess your recovery usually at 6-8 weeks following your operation.
- It is normal to experience some pain or discomfort and oozing in the first couple of weeks after surgery. You will be asked to wear a sanitary towel, which you should change daily, until your first clinic nurse appointment. Please take any pain medication and antibiotics as prescribed.
- You may also experience intermittent pains and reduced or increased sensitivity. It is likely there will be some bruising and swelling. A wrapped ice pack can be used for short periods.
- Do not use tampons or wear tight fitting underwear for 6 weeks.
- Personal hygiene is important after surgery, you should shower daily but do not have bath for the first 2 weeks after surgery.
- Do not use any creams or skin care products on the wounds until your surgeon advises you can.
- In order to reduce the risk of infection and delayed healing we advise that you do not smoke for 4 weeks after your surgery.
- Avoid alcohol for 1 week after surgery and recreational drugs for 4 weeks.
- You should refrain from sexual intercourse for 8 weeks after surgery.
- You should not perform any strenuous exercise (including lifting heavy shopping) for 6 weeks after surgery and avoid cycling or riding during this period. However, whilst rest in the days following surgery is essential, it is also important that you do not retreat to your bed.
- You should avoid driving for 2 weeks and be able to perform an emergency stop before you start driving. Please also check with your insurer.

- Maintain a healthy diet and fluid intake and increase fibre in your diet to avoid constipation as the surgical process can upset your normal bowel action. Avoid straining when going to the toilet so that the pressure is not put on the wound.
- You should not fly for 2 weeks after surgery and should also check with the airline for their specific requirements. Please do not go on holiday until you have seen your surgeon for a wound check.
- You should not swim in the sea for 6 weeks (or longer if your wounds do not heal well).
- It is vital part of your recovery that you follow all the advice given to you and attend all clinical appointments.

Useful Information and Reference Source

- NHS Choices: www.nhs.uk/
- The General Medical Council: www.gmc-uk.org/
- Guidance for Doctors who offer cosmetic interventions: www.gmc-uk.org/guidance
- Professional Standards for Cosmetic Surgery: www.rcseng.ac.uk/
- Consent: Supported Decision-Making (a guide to good practice): www.rcseng.ac.uk/
- Royal College of Anaesthetists (You and Your Anaesthetic – information to help patients prepare for an anaesthetic): www.rcoa.ac.uk/
- Care Quality Commission: www.cqc.org.uk/