

Yes, It's Totally Normal to Get Vaginal Acne

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Sexual Health

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You've probably spotted a zit somewhere other than your face before—hello, [bacne](#)—but have you ever found one near your vagina? Yes, this is actually possible, and you may have even experienced it yourself and just not known it. Just like other parts of the body, the vagina can have dermatologic processes too.

This phenomenon is actually called vulva acne (though vaginal acne has a certain ring to it). It can occur totally on its own, independent from an ingrown hair or razor burn. And if you love to workout, you may be more prone to it. “I would say I see vulvar acne most commonly in avid exercisers where there can be more friction to the vulva, such as in spinning classes,” says Catherine Goodstein, M.D., an obstetrician and gynecologist at Carnegie Hill OB/GYN in New York City. “Extreme sweating combined with excess sebum production and tight exercise clothing can produce pimples.”

It's important to note the difference between vulva acne, an ingrown hair, and something more serious like an STD. First, don't jump to conclusions if you notice bumps down there—especially if you haven't been sexually active or have been practicing safe sex. Ingrown hairs, can cause folliculitis, a.k.a. an inflamed hair follicle, explains Dr. Goodstein. This occurs either after shaving or waxing. They can look similar to other body acne, with whiteheads and all (but don't pop them!). “In today's age, with the multitude of women pursuing hair removal options, I see folliculitis quite frequently,” says Dr. Goodstein. Compared to ingrown hairs, vulvar acne can be more uncomfortable and cause distress if you have it. The bumps contain more fluid, or sebum, too.

If you're feeling extreme discomfort and have deep painful lesions filled with puss that may even look like blackheads, you may have the less common dermatological disorder of the vulva known as hidradenitis suppurativa.

“There seems to be a genetic predisposition to forming these lesions, and obesity is a risk factor,” explains Dr. Goodstein. “In addition there is believed to be a hormonal component to these, as patients with this disorder seem to do better when their hormones are regulated by birth control pills.” Hidradenitis suppurativa can also be treated with antibiotics or steroids. If you’re not sure what’s going on down there, it’s always best to make an appointment to see your OB/GYN to find out.

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To help ease the pain and rid yourself of vulva acne, Dr. Goodstein recommends placing warm compresses on the affected area. “Most vulvar acne doesn’t recur the way it would on the face,” explains Dr. Goodstein. “Creams wouldn’t work as well because they would rub off on clothing. Your best bet would be applying warm soaks and giving them time to go away.” The more you know!