

Mistaken female anatomy — Clitoris or cervix? ^[1]

Dear Alice,

What is the hard jutting out muscle like thing one feels with fingers when inserted inside the vagina? I have been under the impression that this is the clitoris, until I read a little more. Also, is the clitoris approachable enough to suck during foreplay? Many thanks for your time. Awaiting your reply.

Answer

Dear Reader,

Since female genitalia has many parts, it can be easy to get confused — as such, good for you for asking for clarification. One major distinction in female anatomy is internal versus external genital organs and tissues. The vagina is the internal canal that leads to the uterus; inside of the vagina, you can probably feel a couple of body parts "jutting out." The vulva is the external genital area including the labia ("lips") and clitoris, among other parts. While these external/internal distinctions remain constant, it's good to keep in mind that every woman's anatomy has characteristics that look and feel slightly different, in the same way each person's face is at least slightly different from others. Read on for more on the ins and outs of female genital anatomy.

Internal Reaches: The vagina, cervix, uterus, G-spot and more!

Here's the inside scoop: If you insert your finger toward the upper part of the vagina, you will probably touch your cervix. You'll know you're touching the cervix (made of cartilage) because it feels smooth and firm, like the tip of your nose (also made of cartilage). If you reach the middle of your cervix, you might feel the dimple in the middle known as the os, which means mouth in Latin. This is the opening into the uterus. If you attempt to feel your cervix when you're aroused, your cervix may seem harder to reach. The reason is because when a woman is aroused, the cervix ascends, lengthening the vaginal canal.

The other possibility "jutting out" is the urethral sponge, home of the infamous G-spot. Since it protects the urethra during sexual activity, pressing on it may cause a woman to feel as if she has to urinate. The easiest way to feel this area is to insert your middle or index finger, palm up, inside the vagina. If you curl your finger up toward the pubic bone (the front of your body), you

will feel a textured nugget of tissue. During arousal, this tissue swells, making it more prominent. Some women find that touch or pressure to the G-spot is a source of great pleasure. Others don't seem to experience any particularly pleasurable sensations.

Parts on Display: Labia, clitoris, anus, oh my!

Now to discuss the clitoris, which is in fact approachable enough to suck, lick, press, rub, or touch during foreplay. The tip of the clitoris is known as the glans and has between 6,000 and 8,000 sensory nerve endings — as many as the entire penis. For some, the tip of the glans is visible and approachable in the unaroused state. For others, it's less noticeable at first glance, but becomes more noticeable if the hood — the skin that covers the glans of the clitoris — is retracted back with fingers. The clitoris, which is made up of erectile tissue, becomes erect and hard during arousal — similar to a penis, but on a smaller scale. The clitoris also swells and changes position. Some like to have it (either exposed or hidden under the hood) kissed, pressed, sucked, rubbed, or touched. Others find these sensations to be uncomfortable and may prefer not to have their clitoris touched in any way. It's all a matter of personal preference.

The labia, or lips, are the folds of skin that surround the clitoris and the vaginal opening. The outer labia, the ones where pubic hair grows, are called the labia majora. The inner labia, the (often) smaller lips that fold inside, are the labia minora. Labia vary greatly, in color, size, amount of pubic hair, and sensitivity to stimulation. Your labia are very likely normal, even if they don't look like any other you've seen. The anus, which females and males both have, is another prominent part of external genitalia. Some people are content to leave the anus be; others enjoy [anal stimulation](#) [2].

If you've gotten this far and still have questions, you might be interested in checking out some Q&As in the [Genital Wonderings](#) [3] category in the *Go Ask Alice!* archives. Lastly, [Planned Parenthood](#) [4] is also a great resource for acclimating yourself to sexual and reproductive anatomy, so that might be pit stop on your journey for knowledge.

Here's to fruitful explorations,

Alice!

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