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TalkTalk
For Everyone



THE VAGINA DIALOGUES

**99.8% OF CERVICAL CANCER CASES
75% OF VAGINAL CANCER CASES
69% OF VULVAL CANCER CASES
34% OF UTERINE/WOMB CANCER CASES
11% OF OVARIAN CANCER CASES
ARE PREVENTABLE.**



LET'S NOT BEAT AROUND THE BUSH.

Talking about your gynaecological health can feel like watching a film with your parents and a sex scene comes on – pretty uncomfortable, pretty awkward.

But the fact is, the better you are at talking about and understanding the lips, bits, ovaries and clit that make up this amazing part of your body, the better you'll be at preventing the five fanny cancers that affect 21,000 women annually in the UK alone.

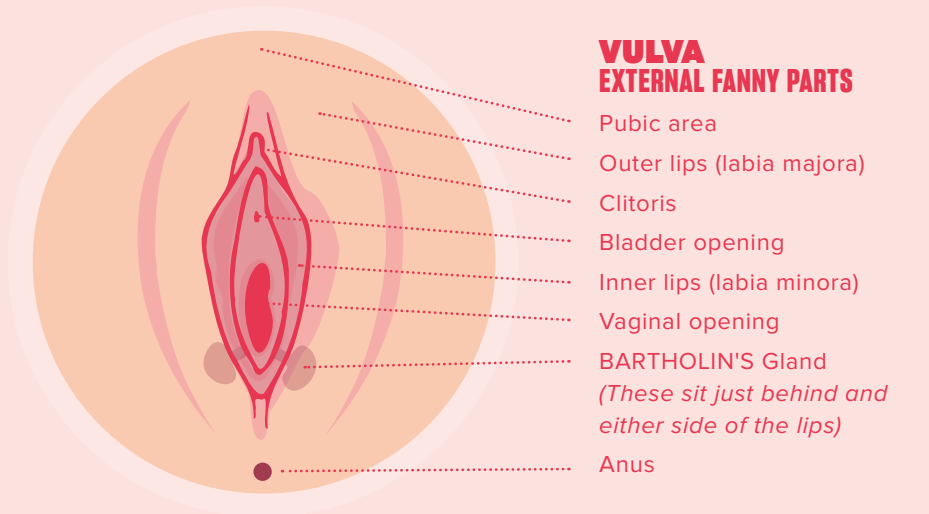
Because although the stats are scary when it comes to your Mary (ok that's just what we call ours), the fanny cancer prevention statistics are lifesaving, never mind life changing.

It's why we've fanny packed this little guide with lots of learning about those lovely bits between your legs. From knowing the cancers to understanding their symptoms and how to talk to your GP. So you can feel comfortable giving your fanny five in all the forms it takes and report any fanny fears to your doctor.

WHAT ARE THE FIVE FANNY CANCERS?

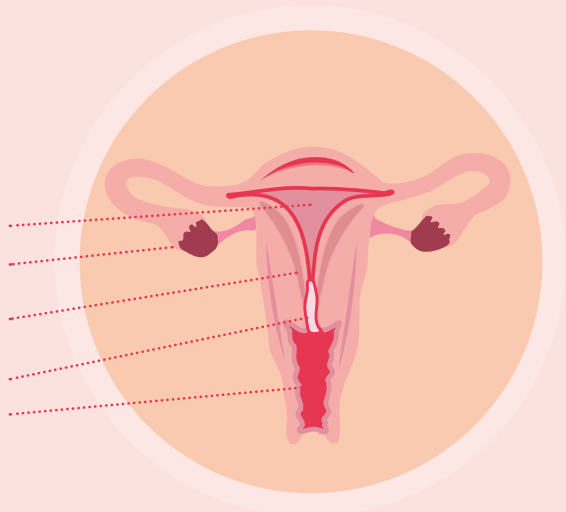
This page will help you learn the different parts of your gynaecological anatomy and give you a brief summary of the different cancers.

Let's start with a little who's who and what's what



GYNAECOLOGICAL ANATOMY INTERNAL FANNY PARTS

- Uterus/womb
- Ovary
- Endometrium
(lining of the uterus)
- Cervix
- Vagina



THREE. WOMB CANCER.

Womb cancer can affect the womb or the uterus, where a baby grows during pregnancy.

You might hear a few different names for womb cancer such as uterine or endometrial cancer, but we stick to womb as it's a little less of a mouthful. These cancers usually start in the endometrium – the lining of the womb.

FOUR. VULVAL CANCER.

Vulvas are usually the bit of their bits that most people hate talking about. It is made up of all your external genitals, including the lips – who if pursuing a solo career would go by their full names' labia minora & labia majora. The clitoris – the sexual organ. And finally, the Bartholin's glands each side of the vagina.

Vulva cancer is rare in people that have not yet gone through menopause, but like most cancers, it doesn't discriminate and can also be caused by HPV.

FIVE. VAGINAL CANCER.

Your vagina is the tube between the vulva and the opening to the womb (cervix).

The cancer that affects it behaves similarly to cervical cancer because it's nearly always caused by human papillomavirus (HPV). But thankfully that also means it can be found and prevented through regular cervical smears and knowing your symptoms.

ONE. CERVICAL CANCER.

Ok, so this is the gynae cancer you're probably most familiar with. Found in the cervix – the opening between the vagina and the womb – it's nearly always caused by an infection from human papillomavirus (HPV).

Cervical cancer can usually be prevented by regular cervical screening or "smear tests", which helps find any abnormal cells and treat them before they turn into cancer. The HPV vaccine which is offered to students in England and Wales in Year 8, Scotland in S1, Northern Ireland in Year 9 and available for free from the NHS until your 25th birthday also helps prevent cervical cancer.* But, vaccine or not – it's always good to know the symptoms and keep on top of screenings (every 3-5 years).

TWO. OVARIAN CANCER.

See those two little circles at the back? They're your ovaries. They make female hormones and store the eggs needed to make babies and can be affected by ovarian cancer.

Although ovarian cancer usually affects people over the age of 50, creating good gynae habits now can still protect you, because a bit like your ovaries you can't see some symptoms, or they don't feel as obvious.

*Availability of the HPV vaccine can vary depending on your location and date of birth.



♥ **LIKE MOST CANCERS,
THE EARLIER YOU SPOT AND
TREAT FANNY CANCERS, THE
MORE TREATABLE THEY ARE.**

THE GUIDE TO GIVING IT FIVE.

There's plenty of ways to give your fanny the attention it deserves. And for us it falls into five fanny categories.

ONE. TOUCHING YOURSELF FOR BETTER FANNY HEALTH.

Touching yourself down there won't just get you off, it's also a great way to feel for more obvious cancer signs.



TWO. GETTING SOME EYES ON YOUR LIPS, BITS AND CLIT.

This is great for checking for external symptoms, spotting unusual discharge or blood and getting to know your fanny reflection.

THREE. KNOWING YOUR EAU DE NUNNY.

They might get called flowers, but no fanny smells of roses. However, noticing if there's an unusual whiff to your discharge could help you sniff out a fanny cancer.

FOUR. GOT FIVE? LEARN FIVE SYMPTOMS.

Use this book, visit the Lady Garden Foundation socials and website, dot sticky notes around your room with symptom reminders. Call it your muff saving mural.

FIVE. SETTING YOUR FANNY GPS FOR YOUR GP.

There are plenty of people, places, and procedures that can help you fly the fanny flag – signing up to your local GP, knowing where your local sexual health clinic is and going for regular cervical screening (smear tests). They are where you can go should you experience any symptoms and help spot less obvious ones.

SYMPTOM SPOTTER.

Gynaecological cancer symptoms can be as clear as a red flag in your knickers or as discreet as a loss of appetite. There's crossover in symptoms with other conditions and let's not mention the number of times they are mistaken for cycles your body naturally goes through.

It's why knowing your body's normal and not being afraid to talk to your GP about why you want to rule out fanny cancers is so important. Take a picture and revise it. Because vauating, we mean graduating, with good fanny knowledge could save your life.



SYMPTOMS CERVICAL CANCER

- Unusual bleeding e.g. bleeding during or after sex, between your periods, or after you have been through the menopause
- Unusual or unpleasant vaginal discharge
- Pain and discomfort during sex
- Pain in your lower back or pelvis
- Severe pain in your side or your back caused by your kidneys
- Constipation
- Peeing or pooing more often than normal for you
- Losing control of your bladder
- Losing control of your bowels
- Blood in your pee
- Swelling of one or both legs
- Severe vaginal bleeding

SYMPTOMS WOMB CANCER

- Unusual bleeding from the vagina
- It may start as light bleeding and a watery discharge, which may get heavier over time
- Pain in the lower abdomen (tummy)
- Pain in the back legs or pelvis
- Pain during sex
- Loss of appetite
- Tiredness
- Nausea

SYMPTOMS OVARIAN CANCER

- Feeling constantly bloated
- A swollen tummy
- Discomfort in tummy or pelvic area
- Needing to pee more often or more urgently than usual for you
- Feeling full quickly when eating, or loss of appetite
- Persistent indigestion or feeling sick
- A change in your bowel habits
- Pain during sex
- Back pain
- Feeling tired all the time
- Unintentional weight loss

SYMPTOMS VAGINAL CANCER

- Vaginal bleeding after the menopause
- Bleeding after sex or pain during sex
- Smelly or bloodstained vaginal discharge
- Bleeding between periods
- A lump or mass in or at the entrance to the vagina
- An itch in your vagina that will not go away
- Pain when peeing, or needing to pee a lot

SYMPTOMS VULVA CANCER

- Persistent itch in the vulva
- Pain, soreness or tenderness in the vulva
- Raised and thickened patches of skin that can be red, white or dark
- A lump or wart-like growth on the vulva
- Bleeding from the vulva or some blood-stained vaginal discharge between periods
- An open sore in the vulva
- A burning pain when peeing
- A mole on the vulva that changes shape or colour

THE DISCHARGE COLOUR CHART.



ALL CLEAR.



Ok bear with us. But think egg whites. Clear and a similar consistency, discharge is usually like this before ovulation, during sex, and pregnancy but not recommended in an omelette.

WHEN WHITE'S RIGHT AND NOT SO RIGHT.



How's this for putting the moo in your moo? White discharge with a thinner consistency like cream and no other symptoms is usually a sign of healthy lubrication. But if the cream turns into more like cottage cheese and leaves a bit of a pong this could be a yeast infection and you should visit your GP.

NOT QUITE 50 SHADES OF GREY.



Usually associated with Bacterial Vaginosis (BV). Although this isn't a symptom of fanny cancer it is still important to speak to your GP as it can usually be sorted with antibiotics.

YELLOW AND GREEN, WHAT DOES IT MEAN?



A slight shade of yellow is usually nothing to worry about and might just be down to a diet change. But if your discharge is starting to resemble Homer Simpson's skin or is even going a little green, it could be a bacterial infection or an STI (sexually transmitted infection) and you should visit your GP.

WHEN THE DISCHARGE IS PINK FROM YOUR UPRIGHT WINK.



Pink discharge can sometimes happen if you're due on, spotting or be a sign of implantation bleeding in early pregnancy. If it appears after sex this might be due to small tears or irritation in the cervix or an STI and is worth seeing your GP about.

WHEN RED DISCHARGE IS YOUR RED FLAG?



Red discharge is perfectly normal on your period. However, if you do experience red discharge outside your period or if you miss a period, go and speak to your GP as it can be a sign of some fanny cancers.

MONTH 1 KNOW YOUR NORMAL.



Use this guide to make note of your fanny normal, we advise doing this for at least 3 months.

Each row is broken down into different things you need to consider. If it's normal for you give that box a big old tick, if there's something you're concerned about use a cross. This allows you to track any patterns and gives you something to refer to if you need to talk with your doctor. **You can either start today, or if you are on your period – wait until the day it has finished to start tracking.**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36		
TOUCH Does it feel like your normal down there?																																						
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SMELL Is this your normal eau de nunny?																																						
SENSATION For any internal fanny feelings such as bloating or pelvic and leg pain.																																						
DISCHARGE Colour, consistency and smell are just a few things to consider.																																						
BLEEDING To track any bleeding or spotting.																																						

————— Depending on how long your cycle is you might need an extra few days —————

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PUSSY PEACE OF MIND.

A guide to check ups, your fanny rights, and the options.

A BIT LIKE PUBIC HAIRSTYLES, THERE ARE PLENTY OF CHOICES.

We need to talk about choice as it's something we often forget when it comes to handing over our health concerns to medical professionals.

But the medical professionals are our partners and to nurture this relationship, we need to learn our rights. Your choices start with the choice of clinic you decide to visit. Whilst it's recommended to visit your GP in the instance that you identify a symptom that is outside your normal, you can also visit a sexual health clinic for initial testing.

FANNY FEARS ARE NORMAL AND SO ARE FURTHER TESTS.

Let's be clear, something unusual doesn't always mean it's cancer, but it is always good to visit a specialist for further testing.

In some cases, you may not be offered a specialist referral, but you are entitled to ask for a referral for specialist treatment on the NHS if you know that something is abnormal. Your GP will listen and assess if it is clinically necessary in your case.

FANNY PREP THAT'S LESS PAINFUL THAN A WAX.

When preparing for your appointment, ensure that you have your necessary points of discussion ready and don't be afraid to ask questions or give your GP push back – you know your normal.

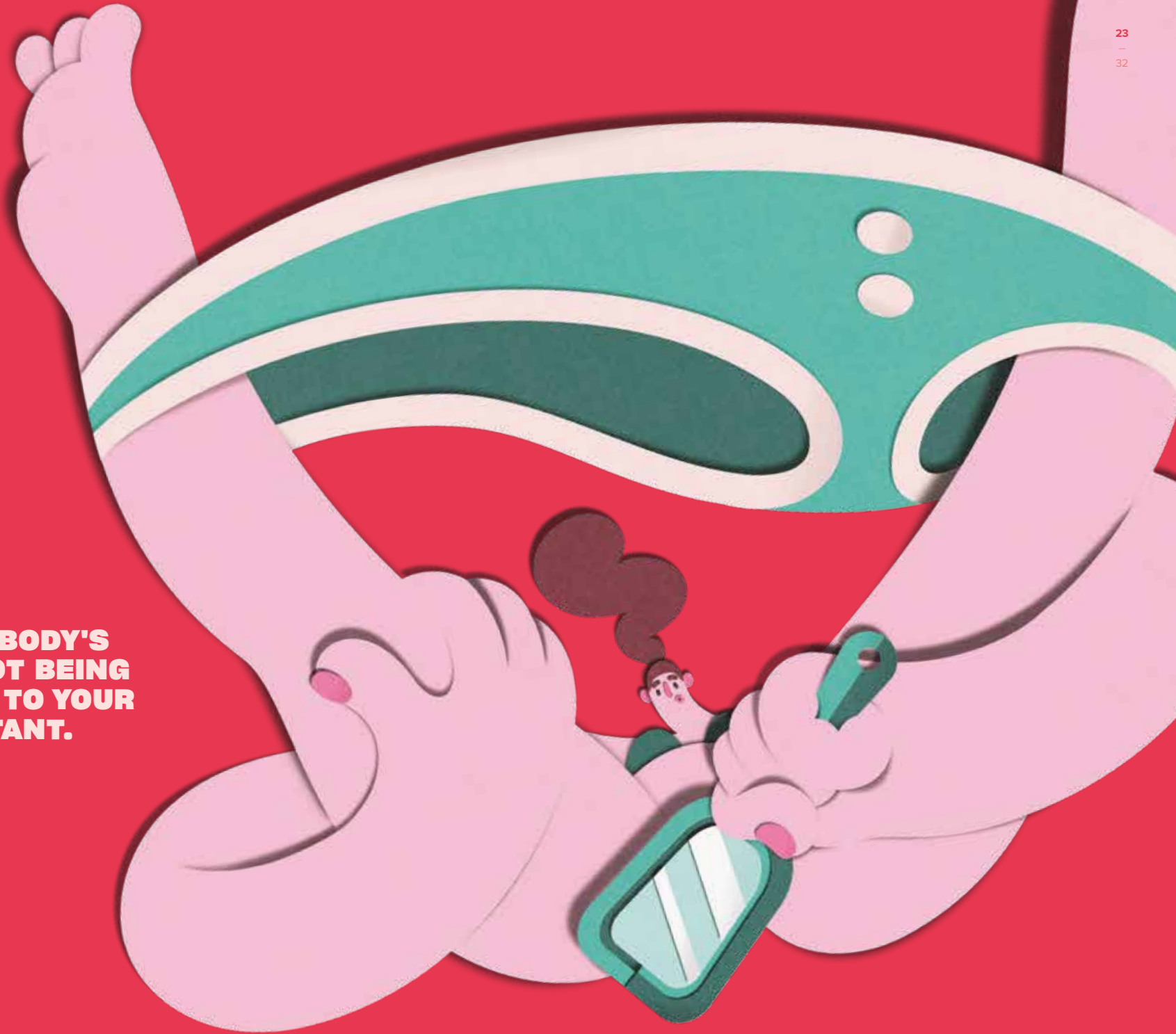
In most cases of abnormality, your GP may do some initial testing like blood tests or pelvic exams before they refer you to a specialist.

GP'S AREN'T THE ONLY PEOPLE FLYING THE FANNY FLAG.

Visiting a sexual health clinic for fanny concerns is a little different. You can visit any sexual health clinic, it doesn't need to be local to your area but depending on the reason for your visit, they might not have the facilities to support you and may refer you to another clinic.

They'll ask you to fill out a short form with some identity and contact details, and once you're in the consultation room they may ask for some more information such as your medical and sexual history before they proceed with any testing or examinations.

♥
**REMEMBER
KNOWING YOUR BODY'S
NORMAL AND NOT BEING
AFRAID TO TALK TO YOUR
GP IS SO IMPORTANT.**



FUNDAMENTAL FANNY RIGHTS

As people with fannies, we know that there are many long and complex laws about our medical rights, so we've pulled out the two we think are worth keeping front of mind.

CONSENT.

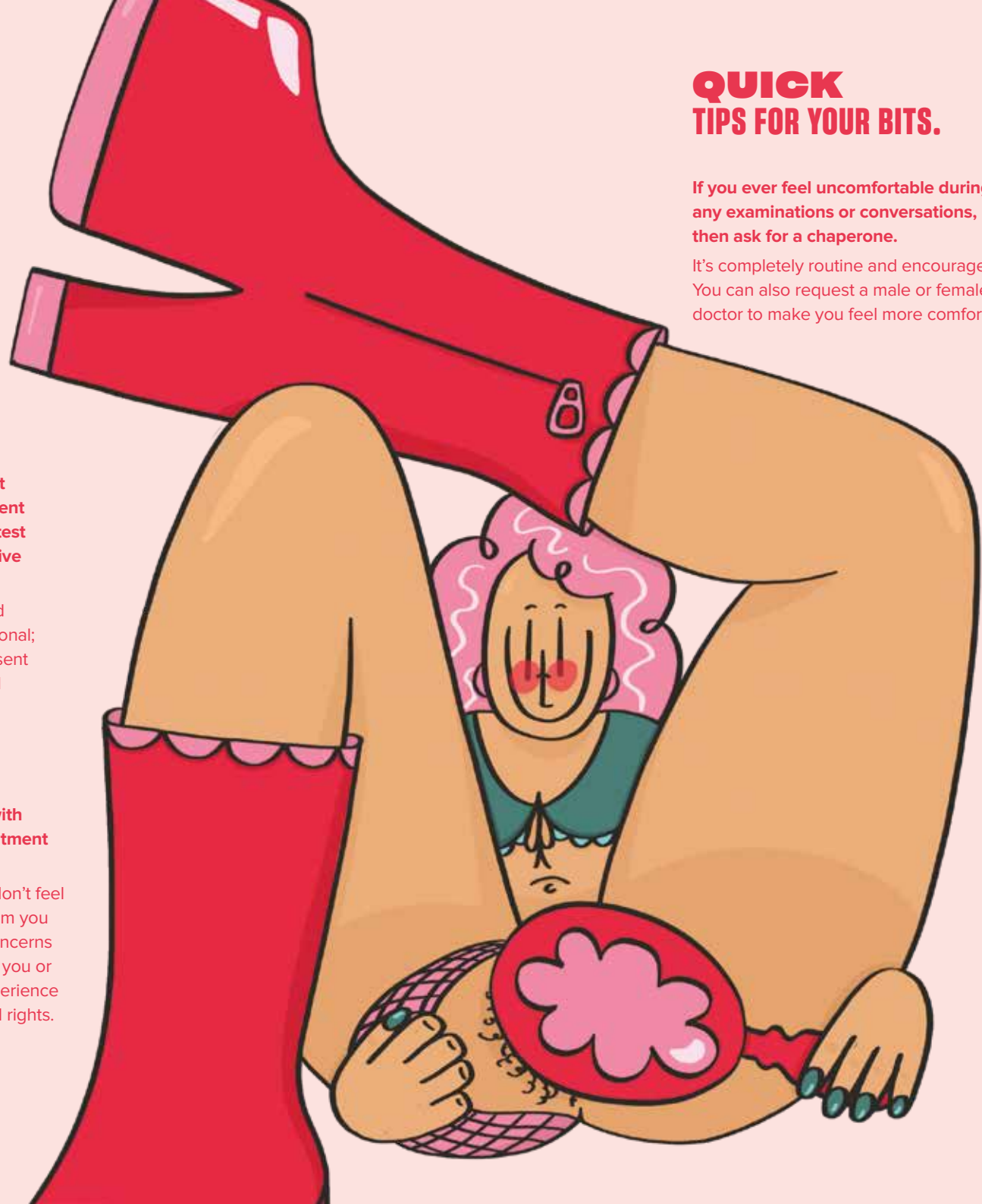
Let's talk about informed consent, a fundamental right when receiving healthcare. Put simply, informed consent is the process of informing the patient of an intended test or treatment, as well as its benefits, risks and alternative options should the person choose to refuse it.

More importantly, you have the legal right to understand the information given to you by your healthcare professional; so, if you're ever unsure then just ask. You must give consent willingly, as it is not valid if obtained under pressure and you can withdraw your consent at any time before and during a procedure, for any reason or no reason at all.

THE MENTAL CAPACITY ACT 2005.

The Mental Capacity Act 2005 states that any adult with capacity to make decisions can refuse any test or treatment for any reason and is entitled to ask for other options.

So, while tests like vaginal exams are important, if you don't feel comfortable with speculums or other aspects of the exam you can speak up, ask for other options and explain your concerns to your doctor or nurse. There may be other options for you or ways for your healthcare professional to make your experience more comfortable and honour your personal values and rights.



QUICK TIPS FOR YOUR BITS.

If you ever feel uncomfortable during any examinations or conversations, then ask for a chaperone.

It's completely routine and encouraged. You can also request a male or female doctor to make you feel more comfortable.

TALKING TO YOUR GP ABOUT YOUR V.A.G

Your GP is no stranger to poo, wee, fannies and bum holes, so don't let a little embarrassment put you off talking about symptoms when it could be the chat that saves your life.

For example, let's say you're experiencing symptoms of vulval cancer – persistent itch, burning when you pee, pain or tenderness around the vulva – simply saying “it's a bit sore and itchy down there” may have you turned away with a thrush cream or oral treatment. It's why nailing your fanny dialogue is so important.

Here are some ways to approach these topics with your GP

'I regularly check in on my fanny health and I've noticed a persistent itch, burning when I pee & pain around my vulva over the last 28 days; I know that it's a symptom of fanny cancer – vulva cancer specifically. I would like to have further testing into this to rule out fanny cancer.'

'I understand you don't find my unusual symptoms to be clinically necessary for a referral. Please could I have a letter stating this and for it to be noted onto my appointment notes?'

'I understand your recommended some next steps, however I don't feel very comfortable with this. I know that I have the right to refuse any test or treatment and ask for more options. Please could you go through the options with me?'

'Thank you for providing me with that information, I'm not fully understanding the information necessary for me to feel comfortable giving informed consent. Please can you explain it to me again?'

'I understand that I was diagnosed with thrush, however I know that these symptoms deviate from my normal as I've tracked them for one full cycle. I would like to request a specialist referral for further examination.'

'I've noticed some symptoms that are unusual to my normal. I would like a vaginal examination to check for any abnormalities, but I would also like a chaperone in the room during the exam, please could you arrange this for me?'

'I was told to track my symptoms for 28 more days and the symptoms are persisting. I am worried about having vulval cancer and I would like to have some considered next steps to ensure that I can rule that out. How can you support me?'

GEEK OUT ON YOUR GYNAE ANATOMY.

Knowing each part and using the right gynae language keeps things as clear as possible when talking to your GP.

GET SPECIFIC WITH SYMPTOMS.

There's no such thing as TMI it simply helps your doctor know exactly what you're experiencing.

THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH STATING YOUR RIGHTS.

Your rights are there to protect you and help you be more comfortable and in control.

MAKE 28 YOUR MAGIC NUMBER.

Tracking symptoms over the course of a full cycle can also rule out any crossover with other conditions.

IF IN DOUBT RULE IT OUT.

Know your rights to testing/screening and ask your GP to rule out fanny cancers.



USEFUL REFERENCES

CANCERS

Cervical	https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/cervical-cancer/
Ovarian	https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/ovarian-cancer/
Vulval	https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vulval-cancer/
Vaginal	https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaginal-cancer/
Womb	https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/womb-cancer/

CERVICAL CANCER SCREENING

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cervical-screening-description-in-brief/cervical-screening-helping-you-decide--2>

GETTING THE HPV VACCINE

England	https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/hpv-human-papillomavirus-vaccine/
Scotland	https://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/immunisation/vaccines/hpv-vaccine
Wales	https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/immunisation-and-vaccines/vaccination-information1/hpv/
Northern Ireland	https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/hpv-vaccine-adolescents-aged-12-13-years-old

CANCER SYMPTOMS

Cervical	https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/cancer/cancer-types-in-adults/cervical-cancer
Ovarian	https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/ovarian-cancer/symptoms/
Vulval	https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/vulval-cancer/symptoms https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/cancer/cancer-types-in-adults/vulval-cancer
Vaginal	https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/vaginal-cancer/symptoms https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaginal-cancer/symptoms/ https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/cancer/cancer-types-in-adults/vaginal-cancer/
Womb	https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/womb-cancer/symptoms https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/cancer/cancer-types-in-adults/womb-uterus-cancer/symptoms-of-womb-cancer
Discharge	https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaginal-discharge/ https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/sexual-and-reproductive/vaginal-discharge https://www.nhs.uk/common-health-questions/sexual-health/what-causes-bleeding-between-periods/
Statistics	https://www.ridgmountpractice.nhs.uk/news/gynaecological-cancer-awareness-month

USEFUL REFERENCES

CHECKUPS AND RIGHTS

<https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/cervical-cancer/getting-diagnosed/seeing-your-gp>

<https://www.nhs.uk/common-health-questions/sexual-health/what-services-do-sexual-health-clinics-gum-clinics-provide/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/cancer/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support-guide/making-decisions-for-someone-else/mental-capacity-act/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/consent-to-treatment/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/periods/fertility-in-the-menstrual-cycle/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/hospitals/referrals-for-specialist-care/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sexual-health/visiting-an-sti-clinic/>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK430827/>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5432133/>

<https://www.patients-association.org.uk/make-the-most-of-your-gp-appointment>

<https://www.rcn.org.uk/clinical-topics/womens-health/gynaecological-cancers>

**GIVE
YOUR
FANNY
FIVE**



With thanks to
**HAVAS
LYNX**

www.ladygardenfoundation.com