What's with the raised bump on my vulva? [1]

Dear Alice,

Are there any other sexually transmitted diseases or causes of raised bumps on the vulva?? I have had reciprocal oral sex with two male virgins. The bump is sometimes red and sometimes flesh in color. It causes me no discomfort or pain, and I have no other symptoms that I can recognize.

?Bumpy

Answer

Dear Bumpy,

Painful or not, it couldn't hurt to get your questions answered by a health care provider. Until then, check out similar queries in the Related Q&As below and let's explore some of the possible explanations for your "down there" discovery. Considering you bring up your sexual history, it's worth mentioning that it is possible to contract sexually transmitted infections (STIs) through oral, anal, and vaginal sex and sometimes through simple skin-to-skin contact like with herpes [2]. Even though your partners were virgins, they could still have contracted herpes other ways and given it to you. However, herpes sores are usually just that: sore and uncomfortable. But even though you say your bump isn't causing you any pain or discomfort, it's still a good idea to get it checked out and to use barrier methods of contraception like condoms and/or dental dams [3] during sex.

Since you say that you only notice one bump and that it's not accompanied by any discomfort, it's also possible that it may be the result of skin irritation, an allergic reaction, or a bacterial infection. To explore this possibility, ask yourself a few questions: Do you have dry skin or skin conditions like psoriasis elsewhere on your body? If yes, what you notice on your vulva may be related. Do you experience abdominal discomfort or have you been diagnosed with an intestinal condition like Crohn's disease? What you see on the outside of your body may be indicating that something is going on inside, too. Did this bump appear after you started using different lotions, body wash, laundry detergent, or after a change in your diet? Even little changes like that may be related to this new vulvar development.

Beside those mentioned above, other common irritants and allergens that may be angering your sensitive genital skin include:

- Menstrual pads, panty liners, and/or their adhesives/fragrances
• Nylon panties or other chemically treated clothing/undergarments
• Douching [4] or other "vaginal hygiene" practices and products
• Certain spermicides, lubricants, or latex condoms
• Some medications, fragrances, or natural products like tea tree oil
• Your own sweat or an ingrown hair

*List adapted from Harvard Medical School [5]*

When you visit a health care provider, giving her/him a history of the symptoms that are concerning you may help pinpoint the cause of the bump on your vulva (i.e., When did the bump show up? Has it changed in size or color?). From there, s/he will likely take a closer look at it as well as inside your vagina to see if there may be other symptoms or signs that are not as readily visible. S/he may also do some tests or collect a few tissue cells to see if they give any more clues.

Your vulva is not only a sensitive area but certainly an important one so here are some ways to prevent irritation in the future:

• Wear loose clothing and cotton underwear.
• When cleaning, use clean hands rather than cloths, towels, or loofahs.
• In the bath/shower, stick to using lukewarm water and gentle, unscented cleansers instead of products with multiple ingredients, even those that claim to be specially designed for use on or around the vulva.
• Pat dry instead of rubbing.

*List adapted from Harvard Medical School [5]*

With help from your health care provider and a little sleuthing, hopefully you'll find the cause and remedy for your vulvar bump. Concern for your health is a great characteristic so continue to pay attention to your body and take special care of your special lady parts.

Alice!

Category:
Sexual & Reproductive Health [6]
Women's Sexual Health [7]

Related questions

Two virgins -- Use condoms? [8]
What do genital warts look like? [9]
Are we in vulva territory? [10]
Labia lowdown! (Or, is what I've got "normal"?) [11]

Resources

Medical Services (Morningside) [12]
Medical Services (CUMC) [13]
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