The female reproductive and sexual anatomy includes the external and internal sex organs, such as the vulva and vagina, and the internal reproductive organs, such as the ovaries and uterus. The female reproductive system produces hormones, which help them develop into a sexually mature woman during puberty. Women also use these organs to produce and release eggs which, when fertilised by sperm, are the beginning stages of a pregnancy.

Female reproductive organs

Organ	Description	Function
Vulva	External genitalia.	Protects vaginal and urinary openings.
Outer lips (Labia majora)	Part of the vulva. Two folds of skin, covered with hair and forming a pad of fatty tissues on the pubic bone.	The outer folded skin enclosing the labia minora (inner lips) and vaginal and urinary openings.
Inner lips (Labia minora)	Part of the vulva. Two folds of skin, within the labia majora.	The hairless folds of skin between the outer lips that enclose the clitoris and vaginal opening.
Clitoris	Part of the vulva. Located above the opening of the urethra, a highly sensitive gland packed with nerve endings. Becomes enlarged when aroused.	Sexual pleasure.
Hymen	Membrane that covers the entrance to the vagina. Hymens vary on their size, shape and how much of the vaginal opening it covers.	Helps to protect the vaginal opening.

Organ	Description	Function
Vagina	Muscular tube from the uterus to the vulva and external body. The vagina is elastic in nature so can stretch.	Allows passage of menstrual blood flow from the uterus and the conduct of sexual intercourse. Birth passage.
Ovaries	Walnut-sized, oval-shaped glands located on both sides of the uterus within the pelvic cavity. There are usually two.	Contain ova/ovum (eggs) to be released as part of the menstrual cycle. Produce the female hormones progesterone and oestrogen.
Fallopian tubes	Narrow tubes joining the ovary and the uterus. The ovary end of the tube has finger-like projections floating and reaching over the ovaries to help sweep up the egg.	An egg (ova) or eggs (ovum) moves down the fallopian tube(s) after being released from the ovary. Fertilisation can take place within the fallopian tube or uterus.
Uterus	Hollow muscular organ shaped like an upside-down pear which lies in the centre of the pelvis. Stretches and expands with growth of the foetus during pregnancy	Organ in which the initial embryo, and later the foetus, grows and provides a total nurturing environment.

Relevant resources

Illustrations

Female reproductive system

Fact sheets/booklets/videos

Puberty booklet

This Background Note relates to the following Learning Activities:

- Reproductive systems
- Reproductive systems revision
- Puberty part 1
- Puberty part 2

© 2023 Government of Western Australia Department of Health gdhr.wa.gov.au