Emerging Evidence of Vulvodynia Phenotypes

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Provoked Vestibulodynia

- This condition is abbreviated as PVD.
- It is a chronic pain disorder of unknown cause.
- Symptoms generally include increased sensitivity and severe pain at the vulvar vestibule.
- The vulvar vestibule includes the skin and muscles around the opening of the vagina.

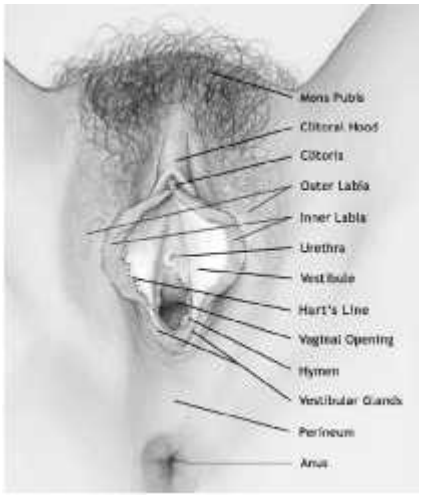
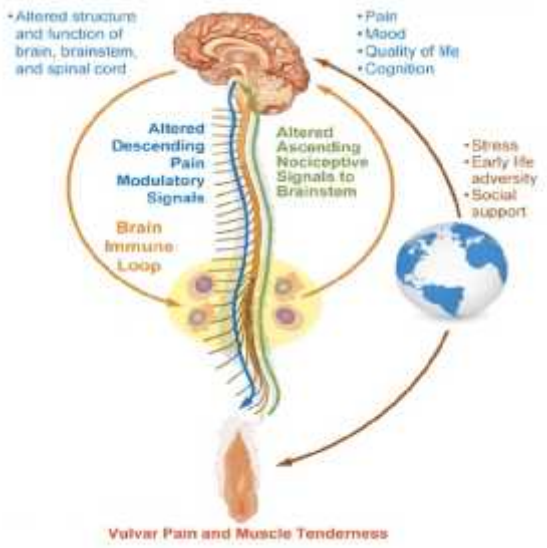


Image credit: International Society for the Study of Vulvovaginal Disease

- This condition affects around up to one-sixth of women. It is also the main cause of painful intercourse in females of childbearing age.



Neuroinflammation

Inflammatory changes within the body can result in lower pain thresholds. This means pain can occur with pressure that would not usually be painful. This can also lead to increased pain sensitivity in the vaginal opening. With this sensitivity, more nerve impulses from the vaginal area to the brain can occur. Overall, this can alter brain structure and how pain signals are processed. Such changes can create an increase in severity or frequency of pain.

- Treatments can include pelvic floor physical therapy, mental health treatments, various medications, and sometimes surgical intervention.

What Causes PVD?

The exact reasons are unknown, but some theories include:

- Neuroinflammation
- Hormone changes
- Pelvic floor muscle abnormalities
- Genetics (inherited changes)
- Increased response to pain

Two of these causes are further discussed to the right:

Hormonal Effects on PVD

- Birth control pills have been shown to be a risk factor for this condition.
- Low estrogen states such as menopause or breast feeding can also be a risk for PVD
- Certain hormones (like estrogen and testosterone) can have positive effects on the structure and function of the vagina and vaginal opening.