

# FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST

May 3, 2018

**Yoko Foscalina**  
**via the FOI website**

Dear Yoko Foscalina,

regarding your Freedom of Information request titled “vulva” we collected the following information:

The vulva (Latin: wrapper, covering, plural vulvae or vulvas) consists of the external female sex organs. The vulva includes the mons pubis, labia majora, labia minora, clitoris, vestibular bulbs, vulval vestibule, urinary meatus, the vaginal opening, and Bartholin’s and Skene’s vestibular glands. The urinary meatus is also included as it opens into the vulval vestibule. Other features of the vulva include the pudendal cleft, sebaceous glands, the urogenital triangle (anterior part of the perineum), and pubic hair. The vulva includes the entrance to the vagina, which leads to the uterus, and provides a double layer of protection for this by the folds of the outer and inner labia. Pelvic floor muscles support the structures of the vulva. Other muscles of the urogenital triangle also give support. Blood supply to the vulva comes from the three pudendal arteries. The internal pudendal veins give drainage. Afferent lymph vessels carry lymph away from the vulva to the inguinal lymph nodes. The nerves that supply the vulva are the pudendal nerve, perineal nerve, ilioinguinal nerve and their branches. Blood and nerve supply to the vulva contribute to the stages of sexual arousal that are helpful in the reproduction process. Following the development of the vulva, changes take place at birth, childhood, puberty, menopause and post-menopause. There is a great deal of variation in the appearance of the vulva particularly in relation to the labia minora. The vulva can be affected by many disorders which may often result in irritation. Vulvovaginal health measures can prevent many of these. Other disorders include a number of infections and cancers. There are several vulval restorative surgeries known as genitoplasties, and some of these are also used as cosmetic surgery procedures. Different cultures have held different views of the vulva. Some ancient religions and societies have worshipped the vulva and revered the female as a goddess. Major traditions in Hinduism continue this. In western societies there has been a largely negative attitude typified by the medical terminology of pudendra membra, meaning parts to be ashamed of. There has been an artistic reaction to this in various attempts to bring about a more positive and natural outlook, such as work from British, American, and Japanese artists. While the vagina is a separate part of the anatomy, it

has often been used synonymously with vulva.

Sincerely,

John Smith  
**FOI Manager**