

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST

May 3, 2018

Coral Tomi
via the FOI website

Dear Coral Tomi,

regarding your Freedom of Information request titled "clitoris" we collected the following information:

The clitoris ((listen) or (listen)) is a female sex organ present in mammals, ostriches and a limited number of other animals. In humans, the visible button-like portion is near the front junction of the labia minora (inner lips), above the opening of the urethra. Unlike the penis, the male homologue (equivalent) to the clitoris, it usually does not contain the distal portion (or opening) of the urethra and is therefore not used for urination. It also usually lacks a reproductive function. While few animals urinate through the clitoris or use it reproductively, the spotted hyena, which has an especially large clitoris, urinates, mates and gives birth via the organ. Some other mammals, such as lemurs and spider monkeys, also have a large clitoris. The clitoris is the human female's most sensitive erogenous zone and generally the primary anatomical source of human female sexual pleasure. In humans and other mammals, it develops from an outgrowth in the embryo called the genital tubercle. Initially undifferentiated, the tubercle develops into either a penis or a clitoris, depending on the presence or absence of the protein tdf, which is codified by a single gene on the Y chromosome. The clitoris is a complex structure, and its size and sensitivity can vary. The glans (head) of the human clitoris is roughly the size and shape of a pea, and is estimated to have about 8,000 sensory nerve endings. Sexological and medical debate have focused on the clitoris, and it has also been the subject of sociological (including social constructionist) analyses and studies. Such discussions range from anatomical accuracy, gender inequality, orgasmic factors and their physiological explanation for the G-spot. Although, in humans, the only known purpose of the clitoris is to provide sexual pleasure, whether the clitoris is vestigial, an adaptation, or serves a reproductive function has been debated. Social perceptions of the clitoris include the significance of its role in female sexual pleasure, assumptions about its true size and depth, and varying beliefs regarding genital modification such as clitoris enlargement, clitoris piercing and clitoridectomy. Genital modification may be for aesthetic, medical or cultural reasons. Knowledge of the clitoris is significantly impacted by cultural perceptions of the organ. Studies suggest that knowledge of its existence and anatomy is scant in comparison with that of other sexual organs, and that more education about it could help alleviate social stigmas associated with the female body and female sexual pleasure; for example, that the clitoris and vulva in general are visually unappealing, that female masturbation is taboo, or that men should be expected to master and control women's

orgasms.

Sincerely,

John Smith
FOI Manager