

Sip 2– Our Bodies

Sip 🙌 On 🙌 This 🙌



OUR BODIES

Sis, with the agency we have to produce life and nutrients, our bodies function as gardens.

We have minds that serve as fences for protection, reproduction systems that house the seeds of life, and a flower called a vagina that provides a portal for new beings to bloom.

And just like the tulips in our auntie’s garden, our bodies need tending to. Though it seems that some of us have lost our green, or better yet, brown thumbs.

But no worries, RoyalTea is here to reacquaint us with our garden, our bodies, and help us to fully embrace this magnificent piece of engineering.

No matter our age, experience, or preferences, we can tend to our vagina (she’s the only one we get) to ensure we’re healthy.

See below to see what she's made of; her purpose, her ins and outs, and her evolution over time. Ready, set, GROW!



Our vagina's power is often underestimated since she's the small tube between the vulva and cervix.

However, this little tube has a large responsibility. The vagina is flexible enough to allow babies to exit during birth and strong enough to secure a menstrual cup in place during our period.

How is our vagina so powerful? Welp...

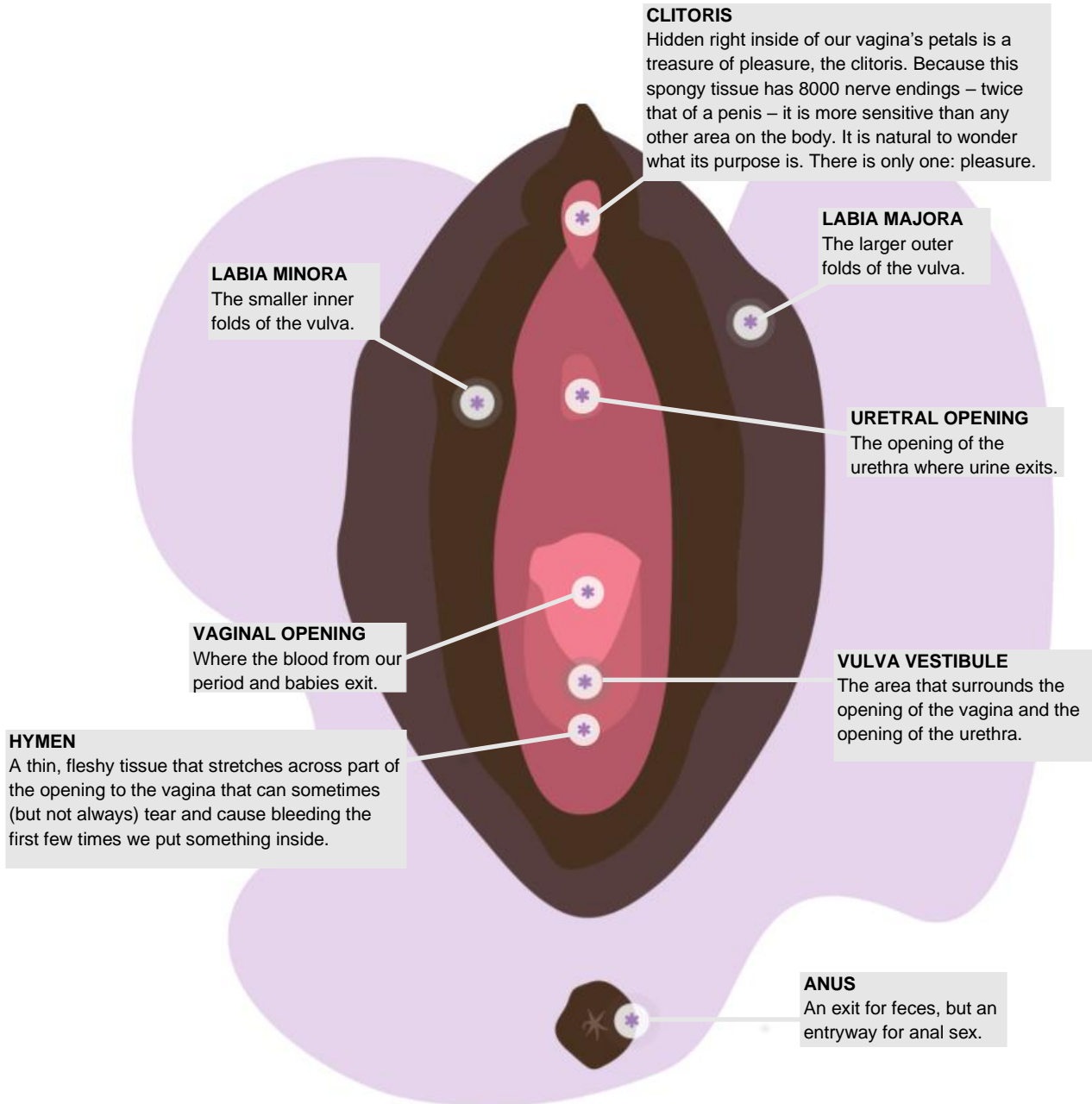
- The flowery looking walls of skin around the vagina are called rugae. These walls provide both a barrier and access route between the cervix and the outside world. Think of it as a petal of protection.
- Fluids are released through the walls of the vagina to keep the area moist, and during times of sexual arousal, to increase lubrication. Yep, she waters herself too.
- Some of us heard we can use douches to “keep our vaginas clean.” While a little spritz between the thighs feels good, just know that this regimen **will not prevent infections**. In fact, **douching can actually increase the risk of infections**, because it removes some of the good bacteria in the vagina that protects us from infection.
 - Despite what some of us heard growing up, doctors no longer recommend douching. This is because it can change the necessary balance of vaginal flora (bacteria that live in the vagina) and natural acidity in a healthy vagina ([Source](#)). A healthy vagina has a yin and yang of good and harmful bacteria. The balance of bacteria helps maintain a moderately acidic environment ([Source](#)).
 - The irritation and inflammation of vaginal tissues that douching causes actually makes it easier for STIs and HIV to set up shop in our bodies. Secondly, douching can actually cause an infection by disrupting the natural balance of bacteria and yeast in the vagina ([Source](#)).
 - So if you're going to douche, against doctor recommendation, please be aware that this is a risk to your vaginal health.
- Because the vagina is a mucous membrane, it can absorb everything from chemicals in tampons, medications, or contraceptives into our body. So just as we can ensure our bodies absorb healthy food, we can ensure our vaginas absorb things that maintain its health.
- We must check on her regularly as the vagina can change a lot during our life; she's impacted by hormonal changes throughout the body, she grows and evolves with us. We can discover what she feels like when she's happy, so we can feel the difference when she's sad, and take care of her appropriately.

Below is an opportunity to digitally discover our vaginas and learn how each part functions.

Welcome to Operation “Get to Know Your Vagina, Girl”

EXERCISE:

Read through each area of the image to see its purpose.



Our libido (not pictured) is our sex drive or desire for sexual activity. She can't be illustrated as she can't be seen, she's a state of being.

All libidos are different; some of ours increase with age, while others decrease, and then some just stay the same. Just like our hair, skin and nails, our bodies change with age, which can impact our sexual health and sex life when active.

The most commonly known libido dropper is menopause. More than hot flashes, menopause triggers a decrease in estrogen levels, which impacts libido and can create a....

- Decrease in elasticity and a thinning of the vaginal tissue
- Decrease in the amount of lubrication
- Decrease in anticipation before orgasm
- Decrease in orgasm intensity (however, the sensitivity of the clitoris remains the same)

These changes could make certain types of sexual activity, such as vaginal penetration, painful, less desirable, or more risky (dry skin tears more easily).

Again, menopause is the most well-known (or most visible due to those dang hot flashes), but it's not the only cause of libido reduction. Other common causes include:

- **Bad Sex** - If sex is painful or unpleasurable, then it will reduce your urge to have sex in the first place.
- **Non-Sex Related Illness** - Conditions such as arthritis, cancer, diabetes, high blood pressure, coronary artery disease, and neurological diseases can impact sex drive.
- **Medications** - Some prescription drugs, especially antidepressants called selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (or selective libido snatchers), are known to lower the sex drive.
- **Habits** - One glass of wine may turn things up in the bedroom, but too many glasses can turn our sex drive all the way down. The same rule applies to street drugs and smokers, libido decreases are coming for you too. Cigarette smoking decreases blood flow, which may dull arousal.
- **Surgery** - Feeling sexy contributes to feeling like having sex. So surgeries related to our breasts or genital region can affect our body image, which affects our sexual function, which affects our desire for sex. #LibidoDominoes #NotAHashtagAnyOfUsWantToUse
- **Fatigue** - Long days at work, followed by longer nights caring for children, partners and parents can contribute to low sex drive. In addition to physical and mental exhaustion, fatigue from illness or surgery also plays a part in decreased libidos.

If you are curious, there is a longer list of physical, hormonal and psychological things that can affect intimacy with your partner ([Source](#)).

But don't let all this libido talk get you down. Sis, WE GOT YOU.

From one powerful Black woman to another, we've got a tip for you that Big Mama never gave us. When vaginal dryness becomes an issue, using water-based lubricating jelly and lubricated condoms will keep us safe and comfortable.

For the anal sex fans out there it should be noted that the anus doesn't make its own lubrication. Since dry, unlubricated skin tears more easily, using lube helps with the insertion of a penis or sex toy. Have fun, but be safe when enjoying anal penetration. Specifically:

- Use a new condom when transitioning between anal and vaginal sex.
- You wouldn't have sex with a dirty penis or fist so make sure your sex toys and beads are clean before use.

EXERCISE:

If you are sexually active, try lubricating jelly and condoms for your next sexual escapade. See how sweet putting some jelly between those "bread" sheets can be.

Your Vow

Tea time (whether beverage or gossip) is a daily routine.

RoyalTea is no different. It's a daily mantra to caffeinate us with more power and positive action in our everyday lives.

Being Black and being women, there's a dual duty we carry in taking care of our community and our families. But with all this responsibility, we can't forget that there's nothing more powerful than our will to take care of ourselves.

Just think about it, even the safety videos on planes instruct us to put our breathing masks on first, so we can be more productive in helping others. Message! We can take care of others best, when we are properly taking care of ourselves.

So queen, let's sip our RoyalTea daily and make a lifetime commitment to our wellness. Think of this as a series of vows for us to take, to make the best decisions for our health and well-being.

See below for a few vows we created as examples:

- I vow to treat myself with love and kindness.
- I vow to make space to work through my past experiences and use them as a launch pad for growth.
- I vow to take some me-time and make space for more joy in my life.
- I vow to exercise my right to choose whether to engage in sex and a method of protection that works for my intimate moments.
- I vow to choose a partner who is willing to get tested with me and values my health and well-being.
- I vow to prioritize the health and wellness of my body and mind.

EXERCISE:

Use this general list as inspiration to create vows that are specific to your needs. We are all living lives at different ages and stages, so write 5-10 customized vows that reflect where you aspire to grow. Share these commitments with a friend who can maintain confidentiality AND who will vow to help keep you accountable for maintaining your powers.