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Below the Belt

A hot Hollywood procedure has got Atlantans buzzing.

The latest cosmetic surgery craze is lifting more than a few eyebrows—it's changing the way women enjoy sex with the help of a little talked about procedure known as vaginal rejuvenation. (Yeah, we said it.)

"We were just talking about it," a friend says.

"My client had it done and loves it!" another exclaims.

"I'm totally thinking about it!" a third adds.

All it takes is for someone to break the ice, and, then, the more you ask, the more they tell. What I am about to write is neither a joke, nor the result of idle parlor chat or water cooler gossip. More women than I ever imagined have chosen to turn the clock back on their love lives by tightening their vaginas, reducing their labias, enlarging their G-spots and, in essence, surgically "restoring" their virginity. Are such things even possible (especially the latter)?



“More women than I ever imagined have chosen to turn the clock back on their love lives...”

“If you don’t have a problem, you’ll never know about it,” says Dr. John Miklos, urogynecologist with the Laser Vaginal Rejuvenation Institute of Atlanta, who performs vaginal rejuvenation surgeries daily. Yes, daily. “This is about women and what women want, he says.” (And, yes, it’s about their sex lives, too.)

Move over Viagra. Even though topics of male sexuality are hardly taboo, when it comes to a woman’s loss of satisfaction in bed, there’s hardly even pillow talk. Ironically, with some feminist groups calling any medically unnecessary vaginal procedure “genital mutilation,” it’s not an easy subject to broach. But the bottom line is many women who’ve had such procedures say the surgeries have dramatically improved their sex lives. “It has really made a difference!” says 38-year-old Susan, a married mother of two. “Noticeably so for myself and even more so for my husband; he’s a happy camper!” After birthing two children naturally, Susan recalls how sex was something she no longer desired. “To me it was kind of ‘ehhh,’” she says. Today, it’s back to ohhh.

According to Miklos, although Susan originally came to his office to have a vaginal wall hernia surgically repaired, her reasons for tightening up the area are all too familiar. Childbirth often destroys pelvic floor muscles and causes the vaginal diameter to increase, making intercourse less pleasurable than before. “Women attribute the amount of intimacy and the intensity of their orgasms to the amount of friction they have during intercourse,” he explains. “They say, ‘My vagina is not as tight as it used to be.’ When I ask them when it started, most of them say, ‘Once I had my first baby, my second baby, my third baby.’ The problem that these women have is not enjoying sex like they once did.”

Miklos says he has performed hundreds of these procedures and women from all over the world are regularly flocking to his Alpharetta office, armed with Internet research and pictures of what they hope to achieve. “I’ve operated on women from 46 states and 25 countries,” Miklos says proudly. And although there are no official numbers as to how many of these procedures are performed yearly, doctors agree anecdotally they are on the rise.

Many vaginal rejuvenation procedures were pioneered and trademarked by Dr. David Matlock, a Beverly Hills gynecologist/plastic surgeon who gave the procedures attractive sounding names such as designer laser vaginoplasty and laser vaginal rejuvenation. His book, “Sex by Design,” explains options available to women to tighten their vaginas and improve their sexual experiences. His Web site, drmatlock.com, pairs “before” and “after” illustrations with glowing testimonials from sexually satisfied women, along with the doctor’s mission to “empower women with knowledge, choice and alternatives.”

Although Miklos praises his Hollywood colleague for “introducing [LVR] to patients who want to improve their quality of life,” he says that the procedure is not just about vanity or pleasure—nor should it be. The National Gynecological Association, for example, interviewed 138 patients who requested labia reduction procedures, 33 percent of whom said it was purely cosmetic. Another third, however, had the procedure to remedy discomfort and irritation. According to Miklos, “The last 34 percent said it’s basically both.”

Whether vaginal rejuvenation opens Pandora’s Box to public discourse, opinion and parody remains to be seen. For now, at least, the genie is out of the bottle and women are asking that unspeakable question: Should I? —ELINA FUHRMAN