



## Hymen Variations

### What is the hymen?

The hymen is a thin piece of tissue located at the opening of the vagina. Hymens come in different shapes, the most common shapes are crescent or annular (circular). The hymen needs to be open to allow menstrual blood and normal secretions to pass through the vagina.

### What is an imperforate hymen?

If there is an imperforate hymen, the hymen tissue completely covers the vaginal opening. This prevents menstrual blood and normal secretions from exiting the vagina.

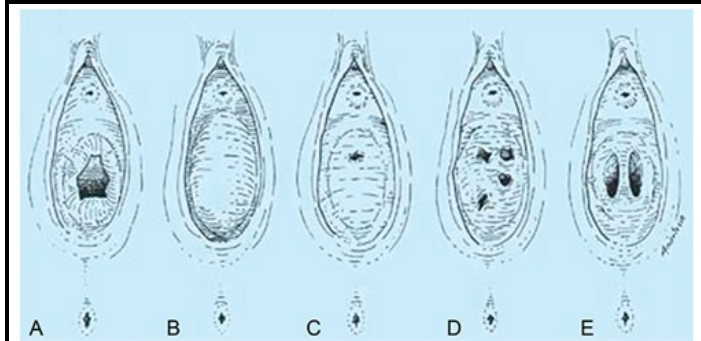
An imperforate hymen may be diagnosed at birth, but more commonly, it is found during puberty. If noted at birth and it is not causing any issues with urination, the imperforate hymen can be managed after puberty begins. When the hymen is imperforate, the vagina becomes filled with a large amount of blood, which may cause pain or difficulty urinating.

### What are other hymen variations?

If there is a microperforate, septate, or cribriform hymen, menstrual blood and secretions may be able to pass through the vagina, but the extra hymen tissue may make it difficult to insert or remove a tampon or have vaginal intercourse.

### Do hymen variations cause any long term problems?

No. Typically there is no effect on sexual function, fertility, or pregnancy.



Anatomic variations of the normal hymen. (A) normal, (B) imperforate, (C) microperforate, (D) cribriform, and (E) septate.

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### How are hymen variations treated?

Treatment of extra hymen tissue (imperforate, microperforate, septate, or cribriform hymens) is a minor outpatient procedure, called a “hymenectomy” – during which the excess tissue is removed.

The hymen tissue does not grow back. Once it is removed, the vaginal opening is an adequate size for the flow of menstrual blood and normal vaginal secretions, tampon use, and vaginal intercourse.

Depending on the amount of extra hymen tissue and patient comfort, the procedure may be performed in the office, procedure room with some pain medication or sedation, or the operating room. Most patients have little or no pain after a hymenectomy.

### Does removal of excess hymen tissue affect virginity?

Virginity is not affected by removing excess hymen tissue. Virginity is not a medical diagnosis and is not determined by a medical exam.