



Caring For Your Child With Labial Adhesions

What are labial adhesions?

Labial adhesions happen when the small inner lips of the genitals, called the labia minora, stick together in the center instead of being apart.

What causes labial adhesions?

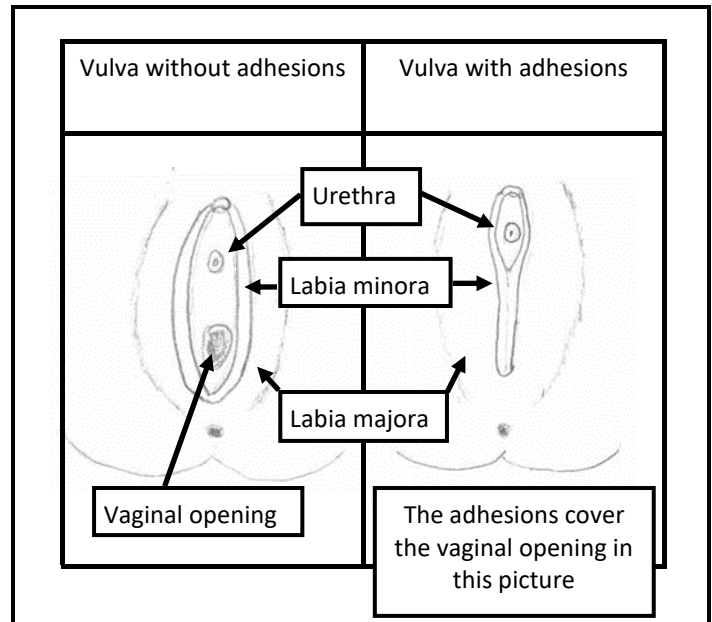
Labial adhesions often form at a very young age. They are most often found in babies or toddlers. Before puberty, the body doesn't make estrogen and the labia minora are more sensitive. When the labia minora are irritated from urine or stool in the diaper, soaps, infection, or even an allergy, the labia can stick together. Some children have very sensitive skin and are more likely to have this happen. Trauma or injury to the genitals can cause adhesions to form.

What are the symptoms of labial adhesions?

Some children have no symptoms and it is just something a caregiver or healthcare provider notices. This happens if the adhesions are small. If the adhesions cover much of the opening to the vagina, the urine can get trapped behind the adhesions after urination (peeing). This can cause leaking of urine into the underwear when the child stands up and can cause more irritation since the area stays wet. Some children with labial adhesions can get a urinary tract infection.

How does your healthcare provider diagnose labial adhesions?

A healthcare provider can tell by looking when the child is sitting with legs apart. If your child is scared, sometimes the provider may have them sit on your lap or on their hands and knees. Sometimes the provider may need to separate the outer lips (labia majora) to see the inner lips. This should not hurt but can be scary to some children.



How are labial adhesions treated?

If there are no symptoms or if the adhesions are small, no treatment is needed. The adhesions will get better as puberty begins. When the body starts to make estrogen, the labia minora become less sensitive and less likely to stick together.

If a child has symptoms like leaking urine or frequent urinary tract infections, the healthcare provider may recommend estrogen cream or a steroid cream. They will teach you how to apply it to help the adhesions separate over a few weeks. Some children can learn to do this themselves. Surgery is rarely needed and when it is, the healthcare provider will make sure the separation is as painless as possible for your child.

After they are treated, will the adhesions come back?

Once labial adhesions have been treated, usually keeping irritants away will keep the adhesions from coming back. Using oily creams such as diaper rash ointment or petroleum jelly keeps irritants away from the sensitive skin. Bubble baths or bathing in soapy water should not be done since the soaps can cause irritation. Usually the adhesions do not come back after puberty starts since the estrogen that causes breast development also causes the skin of the labia to become less sensitive.

Will labial adhesions or their treatment cause problems later in life?

No. Labial adhesions rarely cause any issues with future fertility or sexual function. Labial adhesions are very superficial and do not affect the internal organs such as the vagina or uterus. Your child will be able to have a normal reproductive life when they grow up.