

Lip SERVICE

Discover how to enhance your sexuality

Looking and feeling good encompasses all aspects of your body. Feeling comfortable in your own skin goes a long way towards helping you be confident and content.

As with everything else, aging has an effect on your lady bits, and thanks to childbirth, the wear and tear down there can leave you wanting a little renovation. Vaginal rejuvenation is gaining in popularity, whether it's for comfort, a medical issue, or just to restore it to its former glory.

But it's an area of our bodies that we tend not to dwell on, or discuss with our friends or family. Our intimate zones remain just that.

Dr Julian Bassin is a gynaecologist and obstetrician who specialises in laser vaginal rejuvenation. His Laser Vaginal Rejuvenation Institute of South Africa offers advanced aesthetic gynaecological procedures and is affiliated with the world-renowned Laser Vaginal Rejuvenation Institute of America.

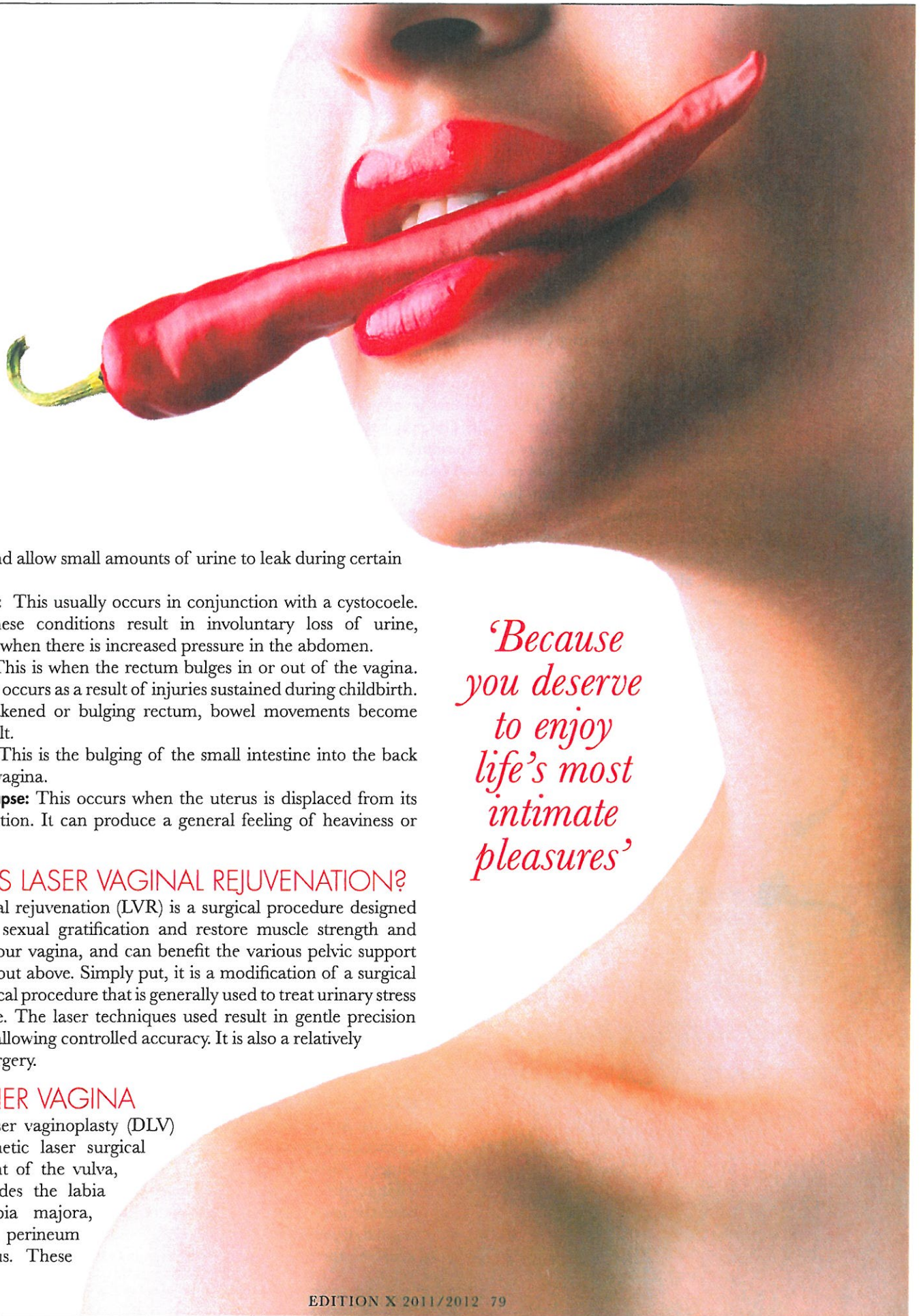
He sheds some light on what you should know.

NEED-TO-KNOW BASIS

Millions of women suffer from symptoms of vaginal relaxation and urinary stress incontinence. This may be as a result of childbirth, aging or a combination of both. Grouped together, these problems are referred to as pelvic relaxation. Appropriate diagnosis and treatment will often restore you to a life free of the aggravations and discomforts associated with pelvic relaxation. The pelvic organs include the vagina, uterus, bladder and rectum. These organs are held in position by your muscles, sheets of tissue called fascia and ligaments. When these supports become damaged for various

reasons, one or more of the pelvic organs may sag and, occasionally, even protrude outside the vagina. These are called pelvic support defects, and include:

Cystocele: This occurs when the bladder falls from its normal position. "The most common symptom associated with cystocele is difficulty in completely emptying the bladder," says Bassin. Large cystoceles can cause the bladder



to overfill and allow small amounts of urine to leak during certain activities.

Urethrocoele: This usually occurs in conjunction with a cystocoele. Both of these conditions result in involuntary loss of urine, particularly when there is increased pressure in the abdomen.

Rectocoele: This is when the rectum bulges in or out of the vagina. This usually occurs as a result of injuries sustained during childbirth. With a weakened or bulging rectum, bowel movements become more difficult.

Enterocoele: This is the bulging of the small intestine into the back wall of the vagina.

Uterine prolapse: This occurs when the uterus is displaced from its normal position. It can produce a general feeling of heaviness or fullness.

WHAT IS LASER VAGINAL REJUVENATION?

Laser vaginal rejuvenation (LVR) is a surgical procedure designed to enhance sexual gratification and restore muscle strength and control to your vagina, and can benefit the various pelvic support defects laid out above. Simply put, it is a modification of a surgical gynaecological procedure that is generally used to treat urinary stress incontinence. The laser techniques used result in gentle precision procedures allowing controlled accuracy. It is also a relatively bloodless surgery.

DESIGNER VAGINA

Designer laser vaginoplasty (DLV) is the aesthetic laser surgical enhancement of the vulva, which includes the labia minora, labia majora, mons pubis, perineum and introitus. These

*'Because
you deserve
to enjoy
life's most
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types of procedures, as is the case with LVR, are done for medical reasons:

Laser reduction labioplasty: This is when the elongated or asymmetric labia minora (small inner lips) are sculpted according to your specification. Most women undergoing this procedure have their small inner lips projecting beyond the large outer lips and want to correct this.

Reduction of excess prepuce: This is when the skin along the sides of the clitoris hangs far over it. The procedure involves cutting the skin so that it drapes neatly over the clitoris. The majority of women who have laser reduction labioplasty want to reduce the excess skin.

Laser reduction labioplasty with combined reduction in the thickness of the labia minora: Some women find that, due to childbirth, aging or genetics, the labia minora are too wide or thick. A combined reduction of the labia minora, along with the thickness, can be accomplished with DLV laser reduction labioplasty to provide the desired aesthetic look.

Removal of the hyper-pigmented ends of the labia minora: Some women prefer to have uniform colouration throughout

the labia minora, so they want to remove the darker ends.

Laser reduction labioplasty of the labia majora (large outer lips): The large protruding or sagging labia majora can be sculptured by one of three DLV laser methods to produce an aesthetically pleasing result. This sagging process can result from childbirth, weight gain or loss, and aging.

Laser perineoplasty: This is when the vaginal opening is stretched. The labia minora, labia majora and perineum are tightened to provide a youthful look and feel.

Augmentation labioplasty of the labia majora: Some women feel that their labia majora are too flat or too small, and they want them enhanced. This can be done by removing a small amount of fat via liposuction from a particular area, such as the abdomen, hips or thighs. The fat is then processed and a small amount is injected into the fat of the labia majora.

RISK FACTORS

Having LVR is a relatively safe procedure with low risks. To put the risk into perspective, pregnancy is associated with far more risk than any of these procedures, says Bassin. Like any surgery, the main risks are haemorrhaging and infection, but this accounts for less than 1%. If you require work on both the upper and lower vagina, there is risk of injury to the bladder and the rectum. But again, Bassin says, this is exceptionally rare. With any surgery, you can encounter scarring, and over-correction can potentially result in painful sex.

BUT WAIT... THERE'S MORE

If having a surgical procedure seems a little daunting, there are other options. According to Dr Maureen Allem, medical practitioner and aesthetician, female genitals can be rejuvenated in two ways without surgery: carboxytherapy and dermal fillers. "When we speak of vaginal rejuvenation, we speaking of regaining function, as well as a cosmetic improvement," says Allem. Menopause often brings with it vaginal dryness, poor libido, loss of sensation and loss of plumpness, which aesthetic procedures can help rectify, she adds.

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HOW DOES CARBOXYTHERAPY WORK?

A carbon dioxide injection lowers the oxygen pressure in the tissues, enough to reach a therapeutic effect. If sufficient amounts are infused, a growth factor is released that causes new capillaries to grow, and the area around the nerves regenerates. This improves sensation and response around the glands, aiding lubrication, and in the muscle and soft tissues, which improves tissue density and thickness. Results from carboxytherapy have been reasonably consistent, says Allem. "There is improved sensation and lubrication, plumpness, improved tone, heightened orgasms and improved stress incontinence."

Dermal fillers can be used to improve the aesthetic appearance of the genital area by restoring volume to the labia. "The procedure is quick and painless," she adds. Typically one to two injections would be used to restore the lost tissue volume, which should last between one and two years.

AND NOW... FOR THE MEN

As with vaginal rejuvenation, male genital rejuvenation can be achieved through aesthetic procedures. "Erectile dysfunction symptoms and signs, like poor-quality erection, loss of erection and general loss of libido, are often caused by general impairment of blood flow and filling of the spongy tissue in the body of the penis with blood when an erection develops," explains Allem. Carboxytherapy can manage cases of erectile dysfunction. The treatment results in long-lasting rejuvenation and restoration of natural tissue in the body of the penis, resulting in improved blood supply and pressure in the penis during stimulation, and the development of an erection. Carboxytherapy stimulates the release of growth factors in the tissue of the penis, and triggers a cascade of hormones and tissue-rejuvenation factors to rejuvenate and re-grow the tissue of the cavernous body (spongy tissue that expands during erection). The growth factors cause the growth of new blood vessels and blood supply to the tissue of the penis, and improve the flow of blood to the cavernous body, resulting in elevated pressure in the penis. "This results in improved cosmetic appearance, as tissues regain plumpness, improved functionality, sensation of the area, and improved strength and size," adds Allem. ■