

Outside your body – girls

Here we'll look at the different parts of the female reproductive system and what they do. The different parts are named and described below.

The external part of the female reproductive organs is called the vulva.

- * **Labia:** These are the folds of skin which cover the vaginal opening.
- * **Clitoris:** This contains sensitive nerve endings and is located above and in front of the inner lips.
- * **Vaginal opening:** This is the opening of the vagina, the passageway that leads to the reproductive organs inside the body.
- * **Urinary opening:** This is located between the clitoris and the vagina and is where urine leaves the body.
- * **Anus:** This is the opening from the rectum. It is located below and behind the entrance to the

vagina. The anus is the passageway through which solid waste leaves the body. For hygienic reasons, when you are washing yourself or using toilet paper, the cleansing motion should always be from the front of the body towards the anus, not the other way round.

The vaginal opening is partially covered by a thin membrane called the hymen, which has an opening in it through which menstrual fluid can leave the body.

It is a common mistake to think that the hymen is a thick membrane that completely covers the vaginal opening.

Some people think that an intact hymen is a sign of virginity, but it's not true. Medically speaking, a virgin is a person who has never had sexual intercourse. A break in the hymen does not necessarily mean that a girl has had sexual intercourse. The hymen can also break through practising rigorous sports.

ACTIVITY

Label each part shown on the diagram, using the information above.

