

*surprising trend*

# "Surgery and my

**Plastic surgery has gone mainstream: with 17.5 million procedures done in 2017—a 10 percent increase from 2015.** Still, there's always been a taboo about one kind of surgery: vaginal rejuvenation. But even that seems to be changing: The American Society of Plastic Surgeons says demand for vaginal procedures rose 39 percent from 2015 to 2016, and the numbers keep climbing. "If you talk to a patient long enough, it becomes part of the discussion," says Colleen Stockdale, M.D., director of the Vulvar Vaginal Diseases Clinic at the University of Iowa, who used to get inquiries from patients a few times a year but now fields them multiple times a month.

The reason? "The average patient is more empowered about her body," says Dr. Stockdale. "Our grandmothers never talked about this. It's the baby boomers who are broaching the topic."

Yet the problem itself isn't new: Vaginal muscles weaken after childbirth and menopause, leading to decreased sexual satisfaction, incontinence and pelvic prolapse. But the standard fix, the anterior/posterior repair, doesn't solve every woman's unique problems. Fortunately, surgeons have developed new techniques that do.

"The vagina can only stretch so far, then it tears under the surface, usually with multiple tears," says Mark Scheinberg, M.D., head of The Center for Cosmetic & Reconstructive Gynecology in Deerfield Beach, Florida. "New surgeries focus on 'site-specific defect repair' to fix the tears individually." And since some of these procedures correct anatomical defects, they can be reimbursable by insurance. "Women have the procedure and their self-confidence is shooting through the roof," says Dr. Scheinberg. "They see the muscle power return." Read on to see how the surgery changed one woman's life.

Robyn Damora,  
39, Parkland, FL



# restored my sex life marriage!”

*Faced with a lack of sensitivity down there, more and more women are going under the knife*

**N**ot again—this is so frustrating, thought Robyn Damora. “With three kids in the house, my husband, Robert, and I didn’t have a lot of time to be intimate. We had to steal those moments when we could,” she shares. “So I was really upset when I noticed I could no longer orgasm during sex. Over the years, I’d lost sensitivity down there, and as a result, I feared I’d been robbed of one of the most special aspects of my marriage.

## Feeling defeated

“Robert and I had always had an active sex life, but over the years it was reduced to just one disappointing encounter a month.

“I understood the changes to my body. Each of my newborns had been relatively large for my frame. Naturally, I tore and needed episiotomies. I got stitched up, but my damaged tissues never snapped back into shape. I was also experiencing urinary incontinence. Whenever I sneezed, I leaked. I’d heard these changes were common from my friends, but I didn’t want to accept them as inevitable.

“Eventually, it all took a toll on my confidence. My husband didn’t seem to notice a difference during intercourse, but he was supportive when I shared my desire to try to turn things around.

“I’d heard about cosmetic vaginal rejuvenation, but it seemed to be about improving the *appearance* of the vagina, whereas I needed mine to function properly again. So I talked to my gynecologist, Mark Scheinberg, M.D. He recommended a new approach in the form of vaginal reconstruction

surgery. He explained that the vagina connects to the body at six points, and any tissues or muscles that are damaged, due to factors like giving birth, aging or menopause, have to be reconnected individually. He said this approach would give me far better results than any quick repair that had been done after delivering my babies.

“I trusted my doctor, but I was still nervous. As a busy mom, I didn’t have time for a long recovery. I had so many questions: *What would it be like? Would it work?* But I couldn’t find a lot of patient testimonials—it was like women were too shy to talk about this.

“I didn’t want to keep missing out on this connection in my marriage, so I decided to have the procedure at Dr. Scheinberg’s outpatient surgery center. I was put under general anesthesia—the whole thing took about three hours. That was on Friday; by Monday I was back to my routine. I was petrified the recovery would be tough, but it was *easier* than recovering from childbirth.

“The procedure, which cost around \$8,000, wasn’t covered by insurance, but I’m so glad I made this investment in my health. Like having knee-replacement surgery, some things are just necessary to get your life back.

“And when my husband and I resumed our love life six weeks later, I couldn’t believe the improvement. My sensitivity and ability to orgasm returned immediately! Even Robert, who hadn’t noticed problems, remarked he could feel a difference.

## Confidence—found!

“I wish I had heard more women talk about this option. I would have done it earlier and not wasted so long feeling terrible. Plus, my incontinence is gone!

“To see my confidence come back is amazing. My husband and I went from having sex once a month to three to four times a week. Our sex life is even better now than before having kids!”

—as told to Lisa Maxbauer

## The laser procedure helping postmenopausal women

**Childbirth, age and hormonal changes of menopause cause vaginal tissue to lose elasticity, leading to leaks and lack of sensitivity during intimacy.** Many women suffer in silence; others resort to surgery. Still others are looking for noninvasive fixes, says Peter Capizzi, M.D., a plastic surgeon in Charlotte, North Carolina. “There is a constant, daily flow of questions from patients regarding nonsurgical solutions to vaginal issues.” One popular option: diVa Laser Vaginal Therapy, in which a device is inserted into the vagina where it “resurfaces” stretched tissue using a laser that delivers pulses that stimulate collagen production. This in turn tightens tissue, restoring sensitivity, preventing incontinence and promoting lubrication. “I expect to see a 200 percent increase this year in diVa procedures at my practice,” says Dr. Capizzi. Women typically need three treatments, which generally cost a combined \$2,500.