

Team finds tight pants and pubic-hair removal increase risk of vulvodynia

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Risk of chronic vulva discomfort and pain nearly doubled by removing hair from mons pubis, or wearing tight-fitting jeans or pants four or more times a week.

Vulvodynia is chronic, unexplained, and debilitating vulva pain, affecting an estimated 16 percent of [women](#) over their lifetimes. A new Boston University School of Public Health (BUSPH) study finds that the risk of vulvodynia is nearly doubled by wearing tight-fitting jeans or pants four or more times a week, or removing hair from the mons pubis. Published in the *Journal of Lower Genital Tract Disease*, it is the first study to show a link between clothing and grooming and the condition.

"With an increase in the prevalence of pubic hair removal directly from the vulvar region, particularly in [adolescent girls](#), the microabrasions to this sensitive area may predispose [young women](#) to immune-inflammatory complications," says study senior author Dr. Bernard Harlow, professor of epidemiology at BUSPH. "Likewise, tight-fitting jeans or pants can create an environment that fosters genital tract infections, which have been shown to be associated with vulvar pain onset."

The researchers used data from self-reported histories of personal hygiene behaviors a year before first reported onset of vulvar [pain](#) among 213 women with clinically confirmed cases of vulvodynia, and a similar time period among 221 women with no history of vulvar discomfort.

They found that women who wore tight-fitting jeans or pants four or more times per week had twice the odds of vulvodynia compared to women who never or rarely did. Most of the women in both groups reported removing pubic hair, but those who removed hair from the mons pubis (the soft mound of skin above the genitals) were 74 percent more likely to experience vulvodynia than women who only removed hair from the bikini area. Compared with women who reported removing only bikini-

area hair less than monthly, those who removed [hair](#) from the mons pubis weekly or more were nearly twice as likely to experience vulvodynia.

More information: Alexandra M. Klann et al, Exploring Hygienic Behaviors and Vulvodynia, *Journal of Lower Genital Tract Disease* (2019). DOI: [10.1097/LGT.0000000000000477](https://doi.org/10.1097/LGT.0000000000000477)

Provided by Boston University School of Medicine

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