Clitoral Adhesions and Clitoral Phimosis

Patient Information · When the clitoral hood sticks or scars

WARWIKI

The clitoral hood is a fold of skin over the sensitive tip of the clitoris. An adhesion means the hood sticks to the tip. Phimosis means the hood cannot pull back all the way. Either can cause symptoms, but some people have none.

Why Does It Happen?

Lichen sclerosus (LS) is an important cause. It is a long-term skin condition that causes itching, soreness, white patches, and scarring. It can scar the hood over the clitoris. Low estrogen after menopause can also be linked to a tight hood. Other inflammation can play a role.

What Might You Notice?

- Pain or soreness at the clitoris, including with touch or sex.
- A small lump of trapped skin material, called a **keratin pearl**. Other debris can collect under the hood.
- A change in feeling or trouble reaching orgasm.

A stuck hood alone does not mean you need a procedure. What matters is your symptoms and the cause.

What Does the Exam Check?

Your clinician gently moves the hood to see how much of the clitoral tip shows. They look for stuck skin, scar, trapped material, and signs of LS. They may also check where it hurts. If you have LS, a new or unusual skin spot may need a small skin sample.

Learn the Terms

Clitoral hood
The fold of skin over the clitoral tip.

Glans
The sensitive tip of the clitoris.

Adhesion
Skin stuck to the clitoral tip.

Phimosis
A hood that cannot pull back fully.

Keratin pearl
A firm bit of skin material trapped under the hood.

Can ointment free a scarred hood? Strong steroid ointment treats LS and helps stop more scarring. It does not undo a scar that is already fixed. Your care team will check whether release would help your symptoms.

Treatment Choices

1. **Treat LS if you have it.** Clobetasol is a strong steroid ointment used for LS. Your team will show you where to put it. Keep using the maintenance plan, even after a release.
2. **Release a light adhesion.** If a small stuck area causes pain or traps material, a trained clinician may numb the area and free it in the office.
3. **Release dense scar.** If the hood stays trapped and causes symptoms, a specialist may offer surgery to free it.

Adhesions can return after release. If LS is the cause, keep using the ointment as directed and keep skin checks. Tell your team if the hood starts to stick again.

When to Arrange a Visit

- Pain, a trapped lump, or a change in feeling or orgasm bothers you.
- Itching or soreness returns despite LS treatment.
- You see a new lump, thick patch, sore that does not heal, bleeding, or a color change.

Call your care team if:

- Pain gets worse after a release
- The hood sticks again or you see a new skin change
- After a release, your temperature is **100.4 °F (38 °C)** or higher

Go to an emergency department if:

- You cannot urinate and your bladder feels full or painful

Three Things to Remember

1. A stuck hood may cause pain or trap skin material.
2. If you have LS, use your ointment before a release and keep using it after.
3. Light adhesions may be freed in the office. Dense scars may need surgery.