

Mechanism of Feminizing Gender Affirming Genital Surgery

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Introduction

Feminizing Gender-Affirming Genital Surgery (FGAGS) refers to a set of surgical procedures performed to modify the male genitalia in order to create female-typical genitalia that aligns with a transgender woman's gender identity. These surgeries are part of a broader process of gender transition, which includes physical, psychological, and social adjustments. FGAGS plays an essential role in helping transgender women achieve a sense of body congruence, enhancing their well-being and quality of life. The procedure typically involves several techniques to modify the external genitalia, including the construction of a neo-vagina, labia, and clitoris, with an emphasis on preserving sexual function and sensation.

Surgical components of feminizing genital surgery

The core objective of FGAGS is to transform the male genitalia into a functional and aesthetically congruent female genitalia, while also addressing the psychological and emotional needs of the patient. The surgery begins with the removal of the male genital structures that are deemed unnecessary for the creation of the neo-vagina, such as the penis and scrotum. The penile skin is often used as a graft to form the vaginal lining, which is crucial in ensuring the neo-vagina is both aesthetically pleasing and functional.

One of the most critical components of the procedure is the creation of the neo-vagina, which involves the construction of a vaginal canal capable of sexual function. This is achieved by utilizing the penile skin and/or scrotal tissue to form the vaginal lining. The skin from the scrotum, when available, is used for reconstructing the labia majora and labia minora, creating a realistic external genital appearance. The urethra is also repositioned so that it exits through the neo-vagina, though this step is sometimes avoided if it would require significant alterations that may reduce the aesthetic or functional outcome.

The creation of the clitoris is another fundamental aspect of FGAGS. The surgeon constructs a neo-clitoris by carefully sculpting a small portion of the glans penis, preserving its nerve endings to maximize sensory function. The clitoris is typically located at the junction of the labia minora, simulating the female anatomy. Careful attention is given to the preservation of the neurovascular bundle that allows for sexual sensitivity, as

this is one of the most important aspects of the procedure for patients seeking sexual satisfaction post-surgery.

Additionally, the formation of the labia is a vital cosmetic and functional feature of FGAGS. The labia are crafted from the scrotal tissue and are designed to provide a natural appearance that complements the neo-vagina. This is an important step in ensuring that the surgery results in an aesthetically pleasing outcome that aligns with the patient's gender identity.

Post-operative care

Following the surgery, post-operative care is critical for achieving optimal results. The patient must undergo rigorous aftercare protocols to ensure proper healing of the neo-vagina, clitoris, and labia, as well as to prevent complications such as infection or tissue breakdown. Regular dilation of the neo-vagina is a common practice to maintain its depth and prevent scarring or narrowing. Patients are also instructed to monitor for signs of infection, and the use of antibiotics and pain management may be prescribed for the first few weeks' post-surgery.

Another vital aspect of post-operative care is psychological support. Although FGAGS can significantly improve the quality of life for many transgender women, the process of transition involves emotional and psychological challenges. Comprehensive care teams, which include mental health professionals, are crucial for providing the support that transgender women need to adapt to the physical changes and the societal adjustments following surgery. Regular follow-ups with the surgical team are necessary to monitor the healing process, ensure that the aesthetic results are satisfactory, and address any issues that may arise, such as problems with sexual function or urinary issues.

In terms of outcomes, FGAGS is highly successful for many individuals in achieving functional and aesthetic results that align with their gender identity. The creation of a neo-vagina provides the transgender woman with a genital structure that facilitates sexual activity, while the construction of the neo-clitoris helps preserve sensation and sexual pleasure. The labia's construction also contributes to the natural appearance of the external genitalia, promoting a sense of bodily congruence. However, as with any major surgery, there are risks associated with FGAGS, including complications like infection, scarring, or dissatisfaction with the results, which may require revision surgery.